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THE MAGAZINE OF INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT



TOM ZITO TARGETS THE FUTURE OF VIDEO GAMES

INTERACTIVE MUSIC WITH THE CRANBERRIES, BUSH, TODD RUNDGREN & MORE!

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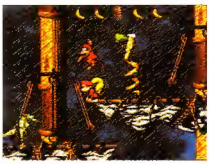
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Diddy's back and better than ever.

Fasten your seat belt. This monkey's coming full throttle. Donkey Kong Country 2™: Diddy's Kong Quest™. Sleek, stylish and fully loaded. With ACM graphics, 32 megs and so many new levels, it even outperforms last year's model. But don't take our word for it. Let Diddy take you once around the park — sunken pirate ships, roller coasters, beehives. (Watch the sticky stuff!)





Torrential rain, bloodthirsty pirates, and now your ship is sinking...have a nice day.

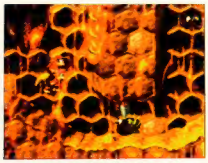


Dixie twirls her ponytail to fly chopper style—talk about a buzz cut!



Guess who's back in town.

Or take his new pal Dixie for a spin — literally. This chimpette flies! There are other special moves too, like the Buddy Toss (please kids, don't try this at home). We even threw in a bunch of multiple endings. But hey, what do you expect from the biggest evolution in history. Except another game that leaves everything else far behind. (Ever been behind a monkey? It ain't pretty.)



Look alive! There's more hidden stuff than ever.



Now there are smarter Kremlings out to slap your monkey around. Ouch!

only for SUPER NINTENDO ENTERTAINMENT SYSTEM

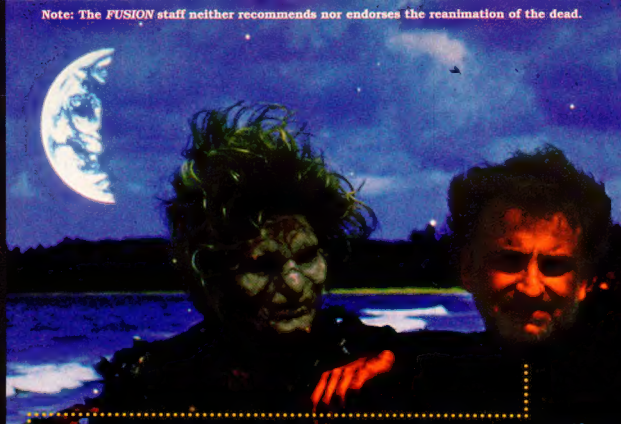
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CRITICAL MASS

Note: The *FUSION* staff neither recommends nor endorses the reanimation of the dead.



With the advent of multiplayer, online games for your PC, the obvious question is why would someone still plunk down $60 and buy their own copy of a game?

The answer draws surprisingly mixed responses: "I consider myself a really good game player, and I don't want some schmuck in Idaho kicking my ass," says one gamer. Gaming is an ego thing—it always has been. And while it's one thing to lose, it's another thing to lose and have your face rubbed in it by a gloating victor. The every-man-for-himself attitude fostered by the *Doom-Deathmatch* crowd can often be more frustrating than fun.

"I like to play games at my own pace on my own time," says another gamer. "I don't want to make a move and then wait for half an hour for the other people to move." Gamers, who traditionally skip through cut-scenes and intros aren't always that patient waiting for the other players to get up to speed. While play-by-e-mail may take up some slack, it can still be frustrating to wait for someone else to get with the program.

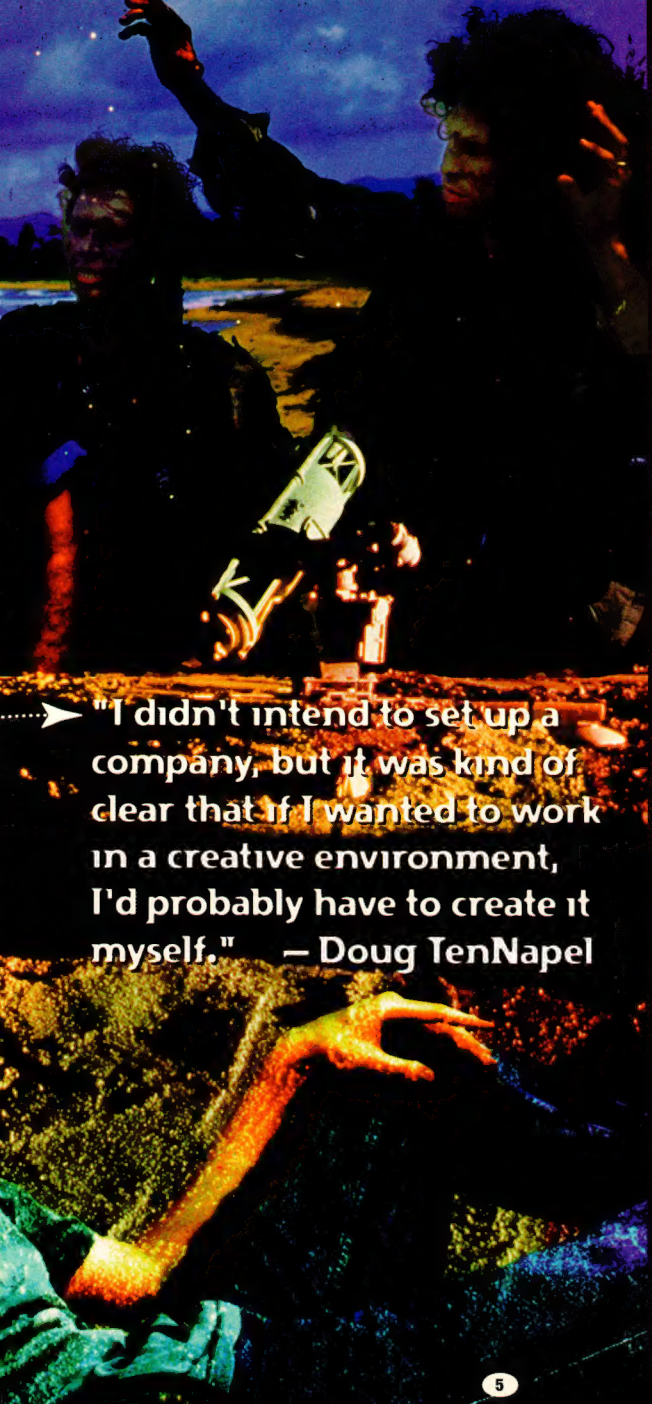
"It's expensive!" someone else shouts, and, well, it can get that way. Learning a new game, be it online or not, takes practice. When you are practicing online though, you're spending money to do so. While you aren't dropping rolls of quarters, you can be greeted by a fat phone bill at the end of the month.

Many of the latest incarnations in this field, such as the much-anticipated TEN, promise to address these concerns: building levels based on experience, letting the neophytes bag on each other or letting the newbies gang up and protect themselves.

When you really think about it, it's like asking why people would still buy CDs when they can listen to the radio. Well, yeah, but if you own the CD, you can hear songs the way you want in the order you want. You don't have to depend on anyone else. It's a control thing. And because of that, there'll probably always be a retail market.

Be careful out there,
The Management

Responding to the nickname "The Roger Corman of Interactive Movies," Tom Zito simply states, "an interactive Forrest Gump would be preposterous."



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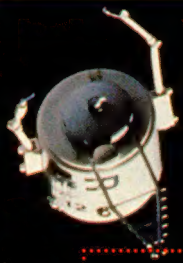
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PHOTO OF BÜSH'S NIGEL PULSFORD BY ANNE MARIE POYO

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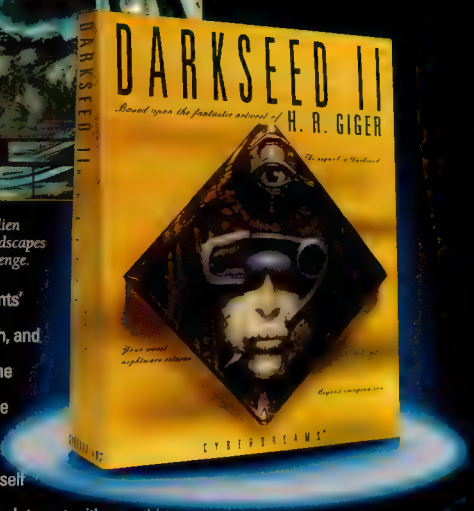
PlayStation

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Generation Ultra

Will Nintendo's Mysterious New Game System Be The Next Hot Thing?

Enveloped in secretive non-disclosure blankets, the Ultra 64 has become a marketing mystery nearly as protected and talked about as *The Crying Game*'s surprise ending or Coca-Cola's classic formula. Originally set for a fourth quarter '95 release with the codename Project Reality, the Ultra 64 has had trouble becoming anything but real, delaying its Japan release date until March and the U.S. release date until April.

The rumor mill continues to grind out speculative grist on everything from game shortage concerns to a $250 price point impossibility. And with glass jar to the wall, the latest from reportive talebearers is that Nintendo is in fact delaying the Japanese release date because of a drastic change in chip technology—according to sources, Nintendo is waiting on the "densepack," a chip that looks like a 16-Mbit chip, but because of peculiar compression and decompression capabilities on the fly, works like a 64-Mbit chip. A short-leashed Nintendo spokesperson at Golin/Harris, who asked to remain anonymous, responded to the rumor, "The board is finished, the hardware is finished and we're waiting for software." Other tight-lipped, Nintendo spokespeople perfunctorily reiterated, "No comment," while suggesting that SGI's microprocessor and graphics chip were working just fine.

Logic Ware programmer Bill Heineman believes otherwise. "They're experimenting with it. Not until the end of this year, till early next, will they make their final decision. I think quite honestly, Nintendo is letting Sega, Sony and 3DO develop all the technology necessary to squeeze all of the performance out of CD-ROM games so when Nintendo is ready to ship their product, they already know all of the fallacies of CD technology."

Of course, Nintendo has shied away from the CD-ROM technology altogether, sticking with the good ol' cartridge. Why? To save money on placing a CD-ROM drive in the system, thereby keeping the promise to deliver a game unit for under $250. Mike Ribero, executive VP of marketing at Sega, is outspoken about Nintendo's decision to go with the cartridge and told *FUSION*, "The flaw with the $249 price point, let's be realistic, is in order to get games that are comparable to Saturn and PlayStation games, you're going to be talking between 64 and 100 Megs of storage requirements. Their first game is going to have to be over $100 whereas you're going to see game prices heading on Saturn at an average of $49, with a plentiful library at $39."

The real issue, however, is not necessarily cartridge cost, but playability. Heck, $100 may be more than a fair trade-off for



"The type of game we can achieve on the Nintendo is completely unachievable on the PlayStation...the Sony is just a dog."

– Brad Hunt, game programmer

consumers if gameplay is as improved as rumor-mongers say. Brad Hunt, president of the animation company Angel Studios and programmer for the Ultra third-party publishing "Dream Team," says flat out, "Nothing else touches it. The Ultra smokes everything." Having signed a NDA (non-disclosure agreement) with Nintendo, he cannot reveal the intent of Angel Studio's work but boasts, "The type of game we can achieve on the



Trigger Happy: The Ultra controller has three handles, 10 buttons, including a trigger and port for a memory card.

Nintendo is completely unachievable on the PlayStation. There's more polygons, more pixels. One of the main reasons we wanted to develop for it is it's so fast. It's a 100 MHz, 64-Bit CPU, so we can actually run a fairly sophisticated simulation with lots of collision detection and lots of physics and lots of AI without slowing the machine down, whereas the Sony is just a dog." Hunt speaks with unrelenting veneration for the U64, but also adds, "There are a couple of technical issues we have gripes about, but generally it's just about getting more of what they're already running. More resolution is something we're going to need. More memory, more speed."

Unfortunately for Nintendo, they're not as speedy as their enhanced SGI microprocessor and will miss the crucial Christmas '95 sales season. Flashback: In 1989, Nintendo failed to match the introduction of Sega's 16-Bit Genesis, and consequently lost half of their market share in the following three years. Could history repeat itself? The answer is no according to William Bluestein, analyst at Forrester Research, Inc. "The big fight in the game business will not be this Christmas, but next Christmas," says Bluestein. In fact, he and Heineman go as far as to predict a video gaming crash this winter, not unlike the gaming blight of 1983. According to Heineman, "The gaming crash of 1983 was caused by the same thing that is happening today. Way too many titles in too short amount of time, way too many machines so the market can't support them all and most of the games out there are crap."

Estimating that the Ultra will easily sell in excess of 1 million systems in '96, Bluestein believes that if anyone should be knocking knees in nervous anticipation, it should be Sega Enterprises. "The Ultra 64 puts Sega in a precarious position because this Hitachi technology that the Saturn is built on doesn't have a clear next step. The Sony follows the MIT's architecture, so it's a nice step from the R3000 to the R4000. 3DO technology is firmly based on the power PC architecture. So it would indicate that Sega is the odd one out from the architecture viewpoint." In defense of the Saturn, Ribero strikes back, "The gaming experience will and should improve through the exploitation of technology, not the technology itself."

Perhaps Ribero is right (and Sega should know considering their 32X troubles) that there should be more stress laid on gamemaking these days, and a little less on all-too-rapid hardware upgrades. Then again, as Williams Entertainment spokesman Roger Sharpe also observes, "If the Ultra hardware can give people something more instantaneously without the same kind of repetitiveness that currently exists with other CD-ROM-based products, then that's going to be a major advantage."

Ultra Innards

The Ultra 64 is nigh among us, and its highly anticipated approach has left much dissension in its wake. Spectrum Holobyte's Steve Race briefly threw in his two cents about the Ultra and his impressions of the delay: "If Nintendo is unable to hit their April date, I will believe it's because of a business or marketing decision to not launch a product at a slow time of year. It's our feeling that the product is done." Done? That's to be seen, but here are the Ultra tech specs as they've been relayed from Nintendo so far. Very impressive indeed.

SPECULATIVES

CPU R4200 RISC chip, 64-Bit, running at 500MB/second bus bandwith100+MHz; 100+MFLOPS per sec.; 100+MIPS

MEMORY At least 3Mb main RAM with use of Rambus, operating at 500+MHz; 128-Bit bus and Cache-coherent memory system

STORAGE Rumored 30:1 compression; 64Mbits, 128Mbits, 256Mbits, 512Mbits

GRAPHICS 64-Bit DSP chip and 64-Bit custom graphics working at 100MHz; color textures and coordinates at 16-, 24- and 32-Bit; Resolutions: 320x224, 512x448, 640x480 (1024x768, 1280x1,024 for HDTVs only) Over 600,000 RealityEngine textured polygons generated at 60fps

SOUND 64-Bit DSP at 44.1KHz and 64+ channels. Number of sounds unlimited per audio track and channels

The Truth Is Out There

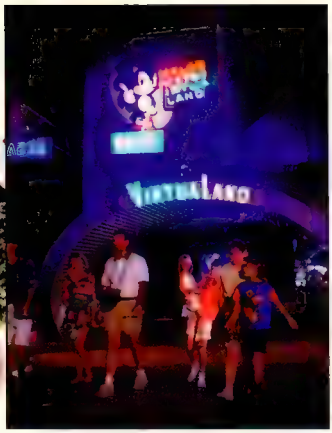
Maybe's the word from most Ultra 64 game developers, but *FUSION* has compiled a list of what's on the release schedule for the system so far. The "knowns" are all games that have been confirmed by Nintendo or developers to date; the "unknowns" are third-party publishers who won't break that damn code of silence, but are currently developing Ultra games; and as for "Dirty Little Rumor," yes, they are.

THE KNOWN: *Shadows of the Empire* (LucasArts) • *Turok: Dinosaur Hunter* (Acclaim) • *Robotech* (Gametek, Inc.) • *Monster Dunk* (Mindscape) • *Doom* (Williams Entertainment, Inc.) • *Top Gun* (Spectrum Holobyte) • *Red Baron* (Sierra On-line) • *Final Fantasy 7* (Square) • *Killer Instinct 2, Ultra Mario Bros., Mario Kart 2, Cruisin' USA* (Nintendo)

THE UNKNOWN: Angel Studios • DMA Design Ltd. • Paradigm Simulation, Inc. • Rare Ltd. and Rare Coin-It Toys & Games, Inc. (*Ultra Donkey Kong?*) • Software Creations

DIRTY LITTLE RUMORS: *Ultra Donkey Kong* • *Zelda* sequel, *PilotWings 2* (Dragon FlyX) • *Stackers* (Virgin) • *NBA Jam* (Acclaim) • *Ultimate MK3* (Williams)





Sega's House of Games

State-of-the-art video games, motion simulators, virtual-reality attractions, among many other interactive rides, are to be joined under one massive roof, in what is to become the premier American modern entertainment center. Banking on the gravitation of thousands of tourists to their newly planned 27,000-square-foot Seattle site, Sega Enterprises, DreamWorks SKG and MCA are hoping that their planned investments won't become the gaping black hole that is EuroDisney.

Al Stone, president of Sega Enterprises, doubts it will—not in the land of conspicuous consumption. He explains, "We're taking our 40 years experience in interactive hardware technologies, 3-D computer graphics and amusement game design to a whole new level."

Skip Paul, the president of MCA Enterprises, is heading up the project. But the joint venture is so new, all the details aren't settled yet. "The papers haven't been completely signed," explained Sega's Lee McEnany, "The royalties, percentages and rights questions have not been answered. MCA brings lots of real-estate assets to the party and location-based entities. SKG will be creating content. The three companies will work together to bring the best talent to the project."

The question is, will "Segaland" simply become an aggrandized '90s version of the seedy arcade pit we abandoned in the '80s? No stranger to the Interactive Entertainment Center business, Sega promises that their new American centers will become a place for the whole family, even Grandpa. The locations in Japan, open for over a year, have already been enormously successful.

Currently, Sega is working with different developers to build a total of 150 Interactive Entertainment Centers around the country before the year 2000. The largest planned center to date is a leviathan 50,000-square-foot establishment to be made part of the Coca-Cola project on the Las Vegas Strip. Apparently, market saturation is not a Sega concern.

Inevitably, this will force the hand of other amusement center giants and change the landscape of future park design. For starters, a fully roofed amusement center can run throughout the year, rain or shine. And the start-up costs are miniscule compared to larger park competitors. Speaking with the resounding "yee-haw" of a cattle rancher, McEnany boasts, "I think we're going to have so many places in the country branded by this new company that hopefully it will open up the arcade market to the whole family." Well alright!

Interactive Exhibitionism

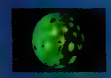
Pressing the red button triggers a recorder inside the museum exhibit's plasticine woolly mammoth, releasing a pitiable prehistoric re-creation of a grunt. The smiling, sweating, curatorial staffer explains that you just participated in a cutting-edge interactive experience. No wonder museum attendance rates have been declining.

Compare this to the new interactive exhibit, *Liquid Vision*, at the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago. Housing a 14,000 fiber-optic cable laser arcade, a hologram gallery and several virtual-reality headset kiosks, the traveling exhibit is among the best to date. While Sega, MCA and DreamWorks are busy constructing their very own mammoth wonderland, *Liquid Vision* proves that even technology ingenues can enjoy the interactive age.

Liquid Vision, however, is not the only exhibit exhibiting interactivity these days. The Interactive Rock 'n' Roll Hall of Fame in Cleveland, Ohio, has an excellent exhibit as does the Tech Museum of Innovation (San Jose, Calif.) which provides the best-of-the-rest with its virtual look into the watery depths of Monterey Bay. Virtual World: Multimedia and the Internet.



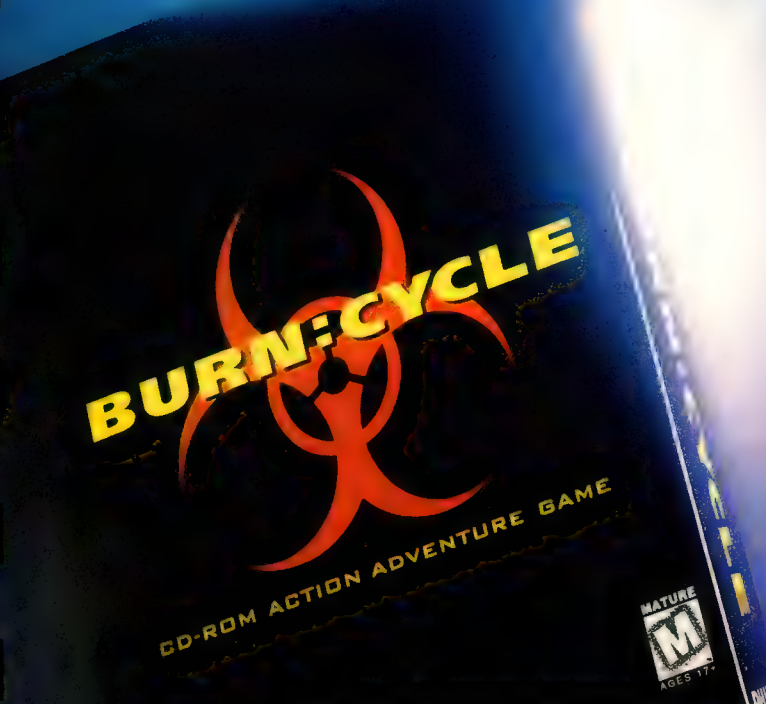
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Plug & Pray? The Next Computer Revolution

"Plug and play" is a joke, but the punch line isn't funny for consumers who can't hook up their newly purchased, $3,000 piece of hardware. Addressing issues of increasing complexities and costs of computers, Oracle's COO Lawrence Ellison has announced plans for the launch of a cheap and easy-to-use network system; the system would involve the use of a central computer brain off of which users could tap power via a "dumb box."

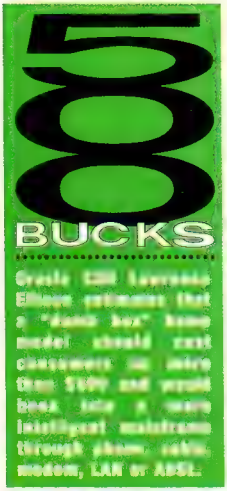
"In some sense, it almost becomes equivalent to a multimedia phone," explains Oracle's VP of New Media, Andy Laurson. "You plug in the dumb box and the idea is that applications are basically being downloaded as you run them."

Speculatively, the network mainframe model does away with the need for most home computer software, as the central network stores and disperses everything from games to word-processing programs to access to the Internet. And as for Microsoft and Intel, Laurson explains, "It breaks their monopoly and allows a lot more competition. You don't have one proprietary operating system. It opens a lot more freedom for other software."

In September, Compaq European's VP Bruno Didier hinted at his company's interest in manufacturing dumb box hardware. Compaq spokesperson, Brian Temple, however, denied any finite plans. "$500 is a very attractive price point," says Temple. "We have identified a need, but to get a product at that price point with today's technology is a very tall order." Laurson, however, says over 30 manufacturers have already shown interest for developing network hardware.

Skeptical of the technology, NEC spokesperson Mike Wong challenged, "People want more power and more functionality with their computers." Wong also showed concern for security and capacity issues.

Laurson isn't at all worried. "Think of the phone. When was the last time you went to make a phone call and the dial tone wasn't there? What's going to happen is, we're going to get a data network that is managed and is just as reliable as a phone network." Steadfast on his thoughts, Laurson concludes, "It's becoming clear that the computer is now an extension of the network, not the other way around."



The High Cost of Computing

Oracle's *Telecom 95* announcement to support the development of a $500 network computer has raised industry brows. When asked to respond to news of the "dumb box," seven of 11 manufacturers faxed *FUSION* tech specs of their cheapest base models available, boasting lowered prices and more powerful hardware. Here are the most basic stats compared.



• Compaq's Presario 700 Series ($1,699+) Pentium 75MHz, 8MB memory, 840MB hard drive.



• Gateway's P5-75 Family PC ($1,899+) Pentium 75Mhz, 8MB memory, 540MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM.



• NEC's Ready 7022 ($1,799+) Pentium 75MHz, 8MB memory, 1.08GB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM.

BeBox (Be, Inc., $1,600 +) Brand smackin' new! For $1,600, you get bare-bones two 66MHz PPC processors, but for $2,500 build up to a 16MB memory, 500 MB hard drive. Extra for 4X CD-ROM. Much power.



• (5200 shown) Apple's Mac. 631CD ($1,599) 66/33MHz proc., 8MB memory, 500MB hard drive, 2X CD-ROM.



• IBM's Aptiva ($1,799+) Pentium 75MHz, 8MB memory, 1GB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM.



• Hewlitt Packard's 5010 Ser. ($1,499+) AMD 486/ DX4/ 100MHZ proc., 8MB RAM, 635 MB hard drive, 4X CD-ROM.

FRIENDS DON'T LET FRIENDS FLY SOLO

And with Werewolf® vs. Comanche 2.0™ you don't have to. That's because with two killer CD games in one box and advanced multiplayer capabilities (via modem, network or direct connect), you can go head-to-head, team up for cooperative play or fly solo.



And whether you're at the controls of Russia's premier attack helicopter or its fearless American counterpart, the RAH-66 Comanche, you'll be flying over the crystal clear reality of Voxel Space™ terrains and experiencing over 100 hair-raising missions. Missions you have never seen before, even if you're a Comanche vet.

NOVA LOGIC™

Werewolf® vs. Comanche 2.0™

Sometimes your best friends can be your worst enemies.

Available on PC-CD-ROM

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Traveling High-Tech

Business travelers never had it so good. From the moment they enter the airport to the minute they return home, there's a whole list of computer services becoming available.

The American Airlines Admiral Club, a VIP lounge in over 30 airport locations in the U.S. alone, is outfitted with state-of-the-art computer equipment, including AST Pentium PCs, Canon printers and other peripherals for the traveler. Boasts American Airlines' spokesperson Mike Gunn, "The Courtesy Computer Center will provide more tools than ever before to transact business while on the go."

If airport decor isn't your raison d'etre, check in at one of the Hilton Hotels that feature an in-room Personal Business Center. The system, called the Hilton SmartDesk, is being tested in several major cities. Rates for the specially equipped rooms average $25-35 above regular room rates, and include unlimited use and support.

And then, of course, you have to eat—but all that work! The popularized CyberCafe provides a stomping ground for online users who need food, video games, companionship and Web access. The average rate runs from $5 to $10 an hour ●



CyberCafes are starting up at a staggering rate of one per week. This NYC cafe offers Internet connection, scanners, laser printers and fax hook-up.

Quips & Quicks

Talk ain't cheap



Oprah Winfrey has a new America Online talk show. No, this is not a joke. In fact, the $600 million woman recently signed with Capital Cities/ABC Inc. to a four-year deal to collaborate on a variety of multimedia, publishing video and network radio projects.

And, of course, there will be an online gift shop for hardcore Oprah fans. Wait till you see the prices on some of this stuff, particularly transcript copies of the show—talk ain't cheap. Be sure to find Springer (gag), Lake (blah), Tempest Bledsoe (huh?) and many others online soon.

Sony's Nanny

Our pal Marty Homlish, just before being named president for Sony's SCEA, offers some advice to actress **Nichelle Tom** of the CBS television series, *The Nanny*. Plug that PlayStation Marty!



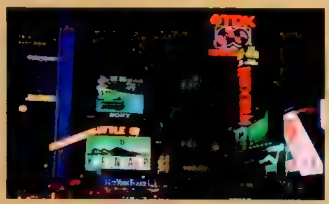


Bennett Benefit

Tony Bennett teamed up with EPSON America to unveil his favorite paintings at Gallery Henoch in New York. Pictured with EPSON's Chief Operating Officer John Lang (left) and company CEO Norio Niwa (middle), Bennett auctioned off autographed EPSON color printouts of his original artwork to benefit the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation. EPSON also unveiled its Stylus Pro XL, which prints photo-quality images.

Warner & Acclaim Unite

Sharing monstrous resources, **Warner Bros.** and **Acclaim Entertainment** have joined forces to copublish three untitled interactive software titles to be based on films currently in development. The games will be available across all video-game platforms, including next-generation systems, coin-ops and PC. Acclaim will have access to film sets, animation cels, movie costumes and props. The first software title is due out late '96.



High Times

On Sept. 6, Sony took advantage of their Times Square Jumbotron to show off Namco's PlayStation game, **Ridge Racer**. Rumor has it 50-foot MK3 fighters are next.

EXTRAS

A&E Network has signed an agreement with **InterActive8**, a New York-located interactive media design and production company to bring the television network onto the Web…**Areal Inc.** a VRML development company is searching for $10 million in capital to develop authoring tools and an integrated browser for TV top-based consoles…**CNN** has removed its service from **CompuServe** and chosen to link efforts with **AT&T** for future online services.

second-guessing refs and snarfing down pretzels is nothin'.

try making 300 critical calls in under 20 seconds each while answering to a side of beef.





if you're an indecisive twit, move on. NFL Instant Replay's the real thing. Over 300 full-motion video NFL plays on PC CD-ROM, narrated by Pat Summerall. But it's not enough to be right. You've got to be fast. Pitted against the clock or a buddy, choose the right answer and move through the regular season, playoffs and into the Super Bowl round. Dispute a ruling? Consult the complete NFL rule book that's included in hypertext form. But why? You're a walking rule book, right?

INSTANT REPLAY

PHILIPS

SUPER BOWL SWEEPSTAKES

TRY THIS ONE:

A Redskin punt touches a 49er blocker downfield. A Redskin picks up the ball and runs into the end zone. What's the call? The right answer could land you and a friend in Arizona next January for Super Bowl XXX.

Redskins' ball; at spot of recovery

Redskins' ball; after 5 yd. penalty from spot of recovery

TD Redskins

49ers' ball; at spot of recovery

Hint: The correct answer is printed on the NFL Instant Replay packages found at your local software retailer.

No purchase necessary. Sweepstakes ends 12/31/95. Call 1-800-340-7888 for entry details.

CUSLOGUE

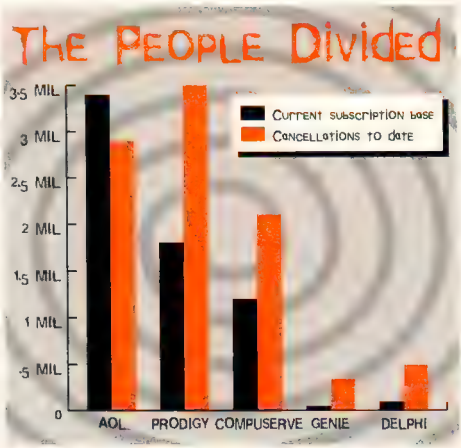
Onlines Suffer From Warring Fractions

INTECO Corporation, an international strategic consultancy, has announced a staggering report on the subscription rates of the five main online services (with the exception of newcomer Microsoft Network): America Online, Prodigy, CompuServe, GEnie and Delphi. Things don't look good, boys. While there is still an excellent subscription growth rate for online services, the number of cancellations is astonishingly high.

For instance, Prodigy has an active subscription base of 1.8 million, the highest subscription rate for that service to date. Yet, Prodigy also maintains a record cancellation loss of 3.5 million users since the service's inception (see graphic). Only AOL maintains a larger number of subscribers than service deserters, and that's soon to change. It's no wonder that companies like CompuServe are attempting to pioneer new Internet service territory.

According to Rob Rubin, vice president of INTECO, "There is no loyalty to the online services…there is no compelling content to greatly differentiate one service to the next, so subsequently, the people who are interested (in online services) are switching from one pre-trial offer to another or changing to the better deals."

Rubin, however, does not necessarily think this augurs poorly for online services. "I think the future of online service is fantastic. The fact is, the growth is still strong considering the given cancellation rate." The forecast for now: People are still curious about online service activity, but if dissatisfaction and brand disloyalty continues, it could mean many rainy days ahead.



ANOTHER NEW COMPUSERVE

Chalk up yet another Internet service, this time from the system providers over at CompuServe. Oddly code-named Spryte, CompuServe's new Internet-only service will cost $4.95 per month for the first three hours of connect time, $9.95 per month for the first seven hours or $19.95 for the first 20 hours. Each additional hour will cost $1.95.

Understanding that the Internet will soon become an operating standard in communications, CompuServe spokesperson Jeff Shafer remarks, "It will be as difficult to function in the future without an Internet address as it would be to function without a phone number."

CompuServe will use Spryte as a lure to their yet-to-be-launched commercial service, WOW or the more aptly titled palindrome, DUD? We'll see.

Wall Street Couch Potatoes

NBC may not be breaking new ground with awful television sitcom programming like *Hope & Gloria*, but the broadcast network is augmenting its involvement with the Internet. The bustle and clamor from Rockefeller Center is the yet-to-be-released Desktop Video low-bit multimedia player. According to NBC spokesperson, Paul Rosengren, the system will allow users to "click and play picture, audio and text multimedia presentations at 14.4 Kb/s with no downloading time."



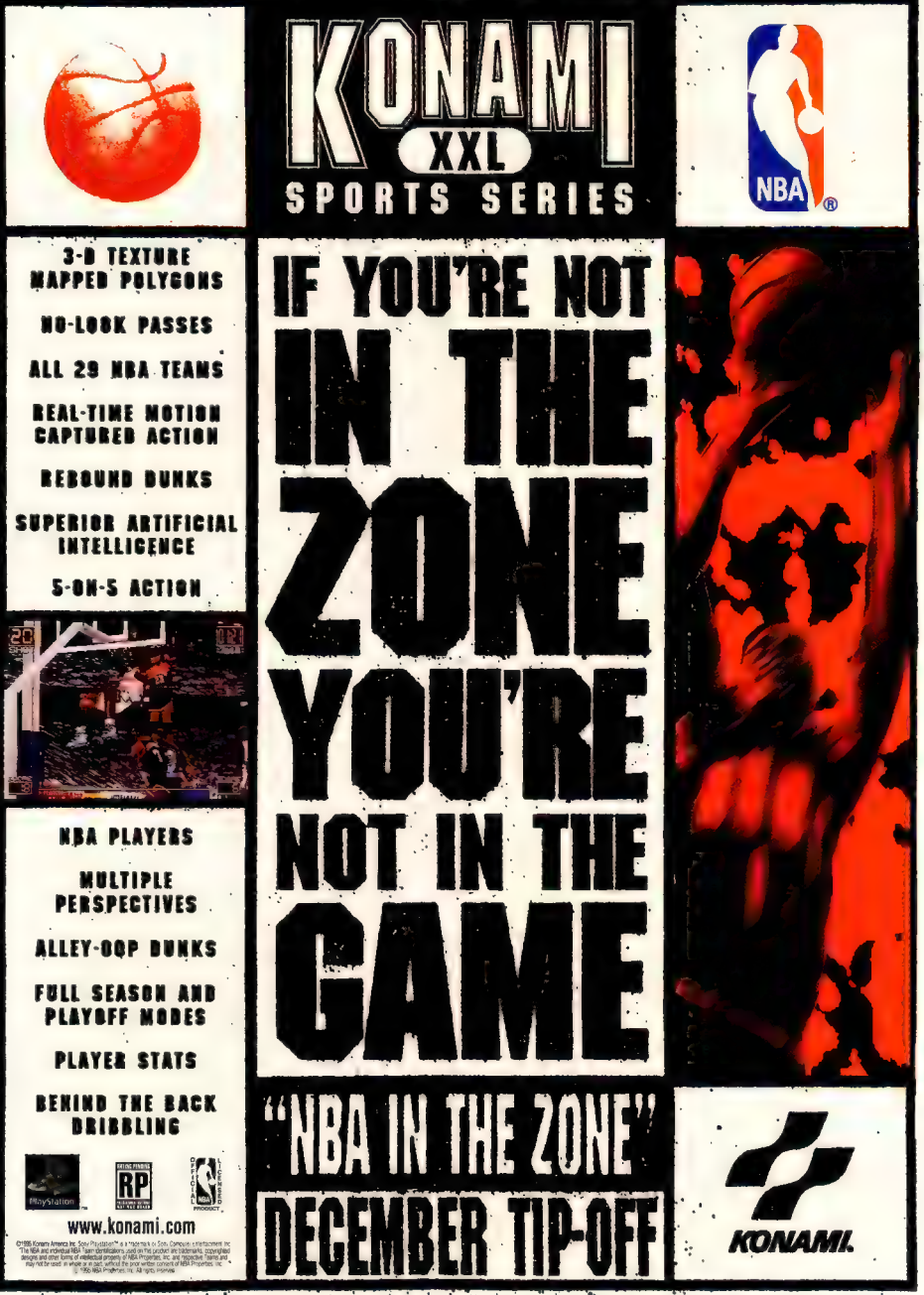
Developed in conjunction with GE Research, Desktop Video will provide live-streaming video and audio so that Tom Brokaw can interrupt your usually scheduled work to bring you up-to-the-minute stories as they break.

NBC has already established licensing plans, and will enlist the system support of Microsoft, Sun Microsystems, Inc. and Netscape.

"It will be available for our service by the end of this year," promises Rosengren. "And then we'll be licensing tools out for other people during first week of January. Sometime in the first quarter of 1996, it will be streaming live audio and the video will be sent live."

Desktop Video will be available as a 12-hour or 24-hour service, but apparently, many top-level executives in financial markets have shown concern over brokers watching too much TV during working hours. To appease Wall Street's concerns, NBC has designed an "alert system," via phone or fax, to inform traders of relevant-only news. So if you're trading wheat and the great Mississippi floods, you'll be made aware to sell.

More information will be made available at the NBC Desktop Video Web site, which will be linked to **www.nbc.com**.


KONAMI
XXL
SPORTS SERIES
NBA
3-D TEXTURE MAPPED POLYGONS
NO-LOOK PASSES
ALL 29 NBA TEAMS
REAL-TIME MOTION CAPTURED ACTION
REBOUND DUNKS
SUPERIOR ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE
5-ON-5 ACTION
IF YOU'RE NOT IN THE ZONE YOU'RE NOT IN THE GAME
NBA PLAYERS
MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVES
ALLEY-OOP DUNKS
FULL SEASON AND PLAYOFF MODES
PLAYER STATS
BEHIND THE BACK DRIBBLING
PlayStation
RP
www.konami.com
"NBA IN THE ZONE"
DECEMBER TIP-OFF
KONAMI

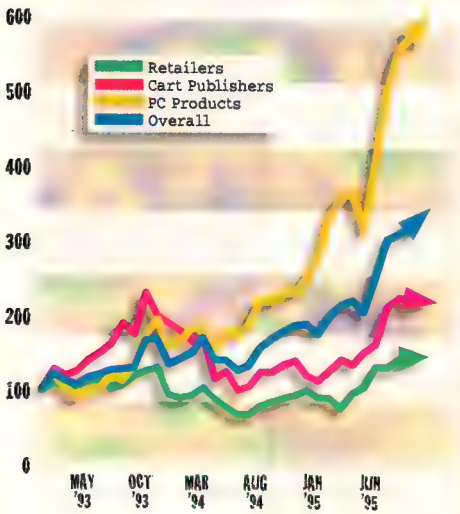
FUSION

....FUSION STOCK MONITOR

Wall Street continuously bid up interactive company investments in September, with the *FUSION* index of representative stocks ending the month up 3.5 percent. This gain was not without pain, however, as numerous stocks experienced wide intramonth price swings. Activity was mixed among sectors, with retail stocks and PC stocks up about 3 percent, while the leading cartridge publishers declined 1 percent. Two major developments impacted the market—the slower-than-expected Win95 upgrade cycle and the successful nationwide launch of the Sony PlayStation (approximately 100K units sold). Winners outpaced losers by a 9-to-7 margin.

The biggest winners during the month were Davidson (+37 percent because of more distribution clout for New Media Express), Creative Technologies (up 28 percent after announcing a new 3-D Blaster accelerator card), Activision (up 18 percent after management completed a national PR road tour) and CompUSA (up 16 percent) on a 17 percent increase in September compstore sales. Also posting gains were America Online (+5 percent), Broderbund (+4 percent), Acclaim (+2 percent) and Sierra On-line (+1 percent). Losses were posted by Egghead (down 32 percent on a September quarter shortfall of sales and earnings), Spectrum Holobyte (-26 percent because of product slippage and an expected revenue shortfall) and T*HQ (-13 percent on profit taking). WMS, EA and 3DO were all down as well.

Investors have a lot to think about this fall. First, tech stocks have staged a huge rally all year, and profit taking through year-end is likely to weigh down stocks. The continuing saga of the Win95 upgrade cycle will either surprise or chagrin investors, and finally, the roll-out of game platforms proceeds. Investors will have to become increasingly discriminating to benefit from developments during the last quarter of '95. ●



By the Numbers

- Sales of goods through on-line storefronts, Internet malls and CD-ROM catalogs will grow from $700 million in 1995 to $230 billion by the year 2000, according to analysts at INPUT, a market intelligence firm.
- Strategic consultant company, INTECO Corp., estimates that $15 million copies of Windows 95 will be sold by the end of this year.
- A study conducted by Computer Intelligence Corp. found that only 27 percent of home PCs have CD-ROM capability while 53 percent of home PCs sold in 1994, however, did have CD-ROM drives.
- A Dec. 1995 RLB Inc. poll shows that when people ask you, "I'm thinking of a number between one and 10, what is it?" the answer is number six 75 percent of the time.

conFusion

International Winter CES Jan. 5-8, 1996, Las Vegas Convention Center, NV; call (703) 907-7600. Trade Only.

Comdex/PacRim Jan. 16-18, 1996, Vancouver Trade & Convention Centre, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada; contact the Interface Group at (617) 449-6600. Trade Only.

UniForum Feb. 14-16, 1996, Mascone Center, San Francisco, CA; contact the Interface Group at (617) 449-6600. Trade Only.

New Media Expo Feb. 27-29, 1996, Los Angeles Convention Center, Los Angeles, CA; contact the Interface Group at (617) 449-6600. Trade Only.

Comdex/ComExpo-Mexico Feb. 27-Mar. 1, 1996, The Sports Palace, Mexico City, Mexico; contact the Interface Group at (617) 449-6600. Trade Only.

Windows World/Mexico Feb. 27-Mar. 1, 1996, The Sports Palace, Mexico City, Mexico; contact the Interface Group at (617) 449-6600. Trade Only.

For more information regarding convention dates, contact: *http://www.eia.org/ceg and http://www.comdex.com*

{ An introduction to the hierarchy of Doom. }



Cyberdemon



Spider Demon



Revenant



Mancubus



Arachnotron



Imp



Lost Soul



Cacodemon



Baron of Hell



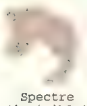
Knight of Hell



Chain Gunner



Demon



Spectre
(invisible)



Former Soldier



Former Sergeant



You

{ Custom Edition for the Sony Playstation. }

Doom. The Sony Playstation Custom Edition. Over 50 levels of madness and mayhem from Doom I and II. Plus all new levels of destruction as well. Every weapon, monster, and surprise you loved before. Plus a two-player Deathmatch mode for when you're feeling really nasty. The nice thing about Doom is you always know where you stand. Even if it's at the bottom of the food chain.



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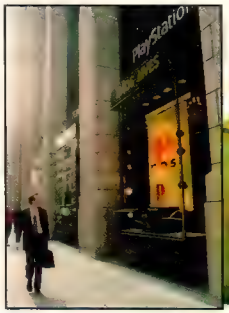
(e)NOS Lives, And So Do Product Gimmicks

Sega of America, Sony Entertainment of America and Acclaim Entertainment are getting gimmicky in an attempt to sell, sell, sell more games The newest marketing trick is the programming of hidden contests into gaming software so as to provide additional purchasing incentive.

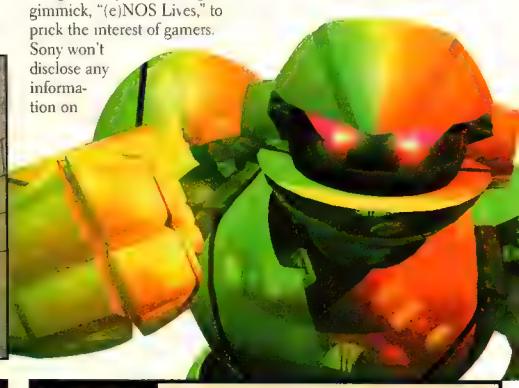
VectorMan will be the first in a series of "Play to Win" video games offered by Sega. Randomly chosen cartridges will have built-in prizes and a secret phone number that will reveal itself when the player completes the game.

Acclaim is incorporating a similar tactic into their *Cutthroat Island* cartridge. Players must seek out five hidden treasure chests throughout the many levels of gameplay in order to access a hidden screen. When found, the secret board will reveal three questions, to be answered and mailed in to Acclaim for a prize drawing.

Sega winners are slated to win up to $25,000 and the Acclaim grand-prize winner will enjoy a five-day/four-night sojourn in the Florida Keys.



Sony, on the other hand, is using the "mysterious" tag-line gimmick, "(e)NOS Lives," to prick the interest of gamers. Sony won't disclose any information on the ad campaign one-liner, although it seems obvious enough—"Sony Lives." It didn't work for *Darkman*, but hey, check out Liam Neeson now.



Bits, Bytes and Buzz...

...Sony Corporation of America announced the ascendency of Bruce E. Stein to president and CEO of Sony Interactive Entertainment Inc., while Martin Homlish was officially named president of Sony Computer Entertainment of America. **...3DO** announced the promotion of Hugh Martin from chief operating officer to company president. In related news, 3DO inked a $100 million pack with **Matsushita** for 64-Bit M2 technology Wow!**...The Software Protection Agency** recently settled a piracy claim against **Harper Hospital** in Michigan for using unauthorized copies of member software. The SPA is also suing rental businesses in Canada for unauthorized rental of software. Future programs scheduled for airing are *Sports Tonight, Inside Politics, Moneyline, Showbiz Today and Talkback Live.* **...Motion Works Group Ltd.** signed a joint venture with Gumboot Productions Inc. to produce *The Sacred Earth*, a CD-ROM title based on Courtney Milne's book. The software sends the user on a pilgrimage to the spiritual power places on Earth. **...Sega** and **Softbank** have recently joined in a venture to distribute interactive entertainment, PC software and hardware in the U.S. **...The Interactive Multimedia Association** has introduced CD Match, software designed to help consumers match CD-ROM titles to their hardware.**...TAQ Research** has purchased rights to 40 kung fu movie titles to be adapted for an original story line in new chapters of *Reflux*, a quarterly interactive comic book.

TOP TEN

Season's Beatings

As predicted, Takara's *Battle Arena Toshinden* kicked up a storm for the Sony PlayStation. An estimated 300,000 copies have been sold to date making it *FUSION*'s number one pick for the holiday season.

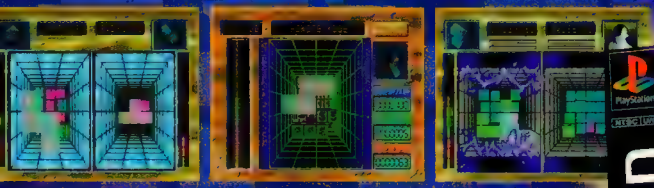


1 ***Battle Arena Toshinden*** (Sony PSX) *Takara*
2 ***Ridge Racer*** (Sony PSX) *Namco*
3 ***Chrono Trigger*** (SNES) *Squaresoft*
4 ***NBA Jam: TE*** (Sony PSX) *Acclaim*
5 ***Vectorman*** (Genesis) *Sega*
6 ***Killer Instinct*** (SNES) *Nintendo*
7 ***Virtua Fighter Remix*** (Saturn) *Sega*
8 ***Slam 'N' Jam*** (3DO) *Crystal Dynamix*
9 ***World Heroes Perfect*** (Neo•Geo) *SNK*
10 ***Daytona U.S.A.*** (Saturn) *Sega*

Mental Block?

If old puzzle games leave you feeling flat,

Try a new dimension in puzzling excitement



A 3-Dimensional Challenge!

GEOM CUBE

Treat your brain to a whole new sensation. Take on a friend or a clever CPU opponent and move shapes in a real 3-Dimensional environment!



The Next Dimension

TECHNOS
American TECHNOS Inc.

1 or 2 Players

American Technos, Inc. 2471 North First Street, San Jose, CA 95131
Geom Cube is a trademark of American Technos, Inc. © 1996 Technos Japan Corporation. Licensed exclusively to American Technos, Inc. PlayStation and the PlayStation Logos are trademarks of Sony Computer Entertainment Inc. The ratings icon is a registered trademark of the Interactive Digital Software Association.

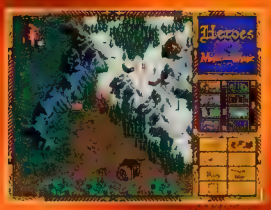

GOLDEN TRIAD AWARD
"A first rate strategy title"
Computer Game Review
PC GAMER EDITORS CHOICE
"Heroes is one of those games that DEMANDS to be played"
PC Gamer
Available at your local software retailer or order direct from New World Computing at 1-800-251-9563 (818-591-4136 outside the U.S.), or by mail: P.O. Box 4302 Hollywood, CA 90078-4302

WHEN THE SMOKE CLEARS ONLY HEROES REMAIN



"This game is excellent, possibly the best strategy game my wife and I ever played together."
Arthur Asin, aol.com

"One word: Addicting!!"
Roctor, aol.com



"The graphics and sound are fantastic, but most importantly it is just plain FUN."
Anthony Granada, aol.com



HEROES of Might and Magic

NEW WORLD COMPUTING, INC.

Check out our hot new Web Site at http://www.nwcomputing.com

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I played tennis with a toad. I was set adrift in the



Virtual Boy presents more games from the Third Dimension. Stick your head in Virtual Boy and you won't be the same when you pull it out. The action comes at you from places you've never dreamed of. See things you've never seen before like Red Alarm™,





Teleroboxer™, Galactic Pinball™, Wario Land™, and included with every Virtual Boy, Mario's Tennis™ and more titles to come.



Jump into the Third Dimension and see what it feels like to be inside the game.





AOL@keyword: NOA
www.nintendo.com

System includes Mario's Tennis. Other games sold separately. Batteries not included. © 1995 Nintendo of America Inc. ™ and © are trademarks of Nintendo of America Inc. Red Alarm™, ™ and © 1995 T&E Soft Inc. Licensed to Nintendo.

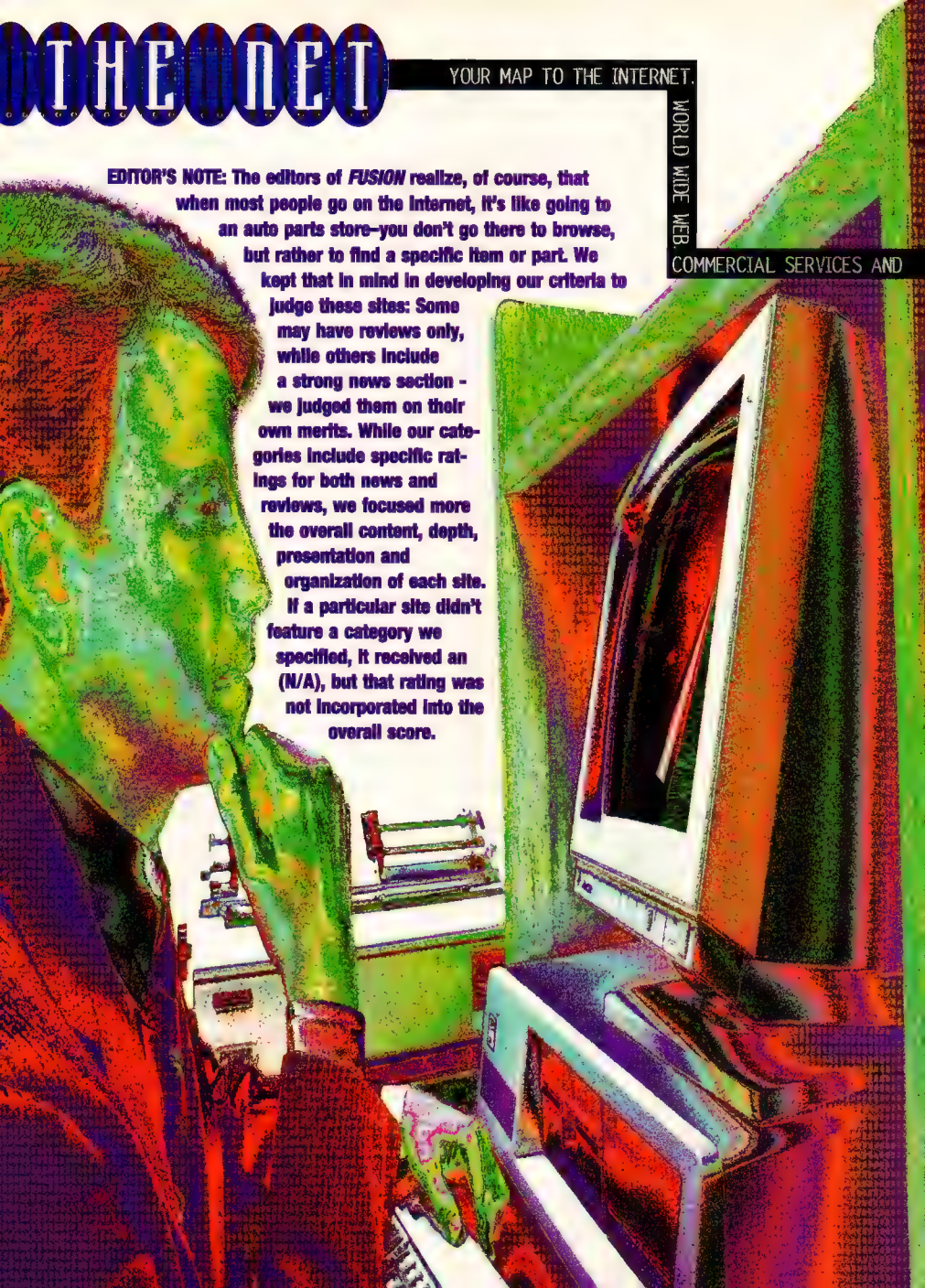

cosmos. I flew into the mouth of a beast.
It was just another day in the third dimension.
VIRTUALBOY
PLAY IT LOUD
Virtual Boy
A 3-D game for a 3-D world.
Nintendo

THE NET

YOUR MAP TO THE INTERNET.

WORLD WIDE WEB. COMMERCIAL SERVICES AND

EDITOR'S NOTE: The editors of *FUSION* realize, of course, that when most people go on the Internet, it's like going to an auto parts store–you don't go there to browse, but rather to find a specific item or part. We kept that in mind in developing our criteria to judge these sites: Some may have reviews only, while others include a strong news section - we judged them on their own merits. While our categories include specific ratings for both news and reviews, we focused more the overall content, depth, presentation and organization of each site. If a particular site didn't feature a category we specified, it received an (N/A), but that rating was not incorporated into the overall score.



Gauging the Gaming E-zines

SPECIAL ONLINE EVENTS

The Editors of *FUSION* Rank the Ether World of Online Gaming Magazines

INTELLIGENT GAMER ONLINE

THE CURRENT REIGNING heavyweight champion of online gaming sites for Netheads is Intelligent Gamer Online ***(http://igonline.escape.com/igons.html)***

With regularly updated news, features, mail and an extensive archive of substantial game reviews, IGO is rivaled only by *Electronic Gaming Monthly*'s NUKE site for the sheer volume of information it packs into its site.

An organized format and graphically appealing computer-rendered art deftly escorts browsers through its extensive storehouse of information. Game reviews are useful, comprehensive and are even sprinkled with interesting insights and observations. A review of *Toh Shin Den* for PlayStation, for example, was three solid pages of well-written text that was followed by rapid-fire analysis of graphics, sound, gameplay, lasting power, conclusion and an overall score. It is apparent that these guys both have a passion to play, and the ability to transfer that enthusiasm into writing.

In the news department, IGO manages to not only keep the section fresh and relevant by re-writing company press releases, their editors also do a respectable job of pure reporting by occasionally breaking new stories.

The only thing wrong with their otherwise strong news department is that, at times, it



is the equivalent of a supermarket tabloid. The editors mix rumors with hard facts, and although stories classified as "rumor" are clearly marked, it would make sense to break these two types of stories into different sections.

Overall, such nit-picking indicates what a strong site IGO is. With a cogent format and substantive writing, IGO is the best example yet of what an online gaming magazine should be.

News: 4
Reviews: 4
Presentation: 4
Overall: 4 1/2

NUKE

NUKE IS PRODUCED by the creative minds behind *FUSION*, *Electronic Gaming Monthly* and a number of Sendai Media Group's other magazines. NUKE ***(http://www.nuke. com)*** is a conglomeration of different entertainment topics, ranging from video games to movies and television, but we'll only be focusing on the video games area for this review.

Accessing the games arena from NUKE's many layers is simple and straightforward. While their use a graphics is fairly efficient, it can bog down many of the screens.

While NUKE does a respectable job in presenting hard, pertinent news, the Interviews area is strongest.



NUKE also covers a good number of games, but not as comprehensively as some of the other sites we looked at. Meanwhile, the Previews section provides browsers with a single picture and sparse information. While it's clear NUKE is cautious to not overly hype a game before it is ready for market, they could have done a better job whetting the appetite of info-hungry gamers.

The Featured Interviews are a nice touch, with big names like Mike Ditka and the creators of *Mortal Kombat*. These vary in quality, but one can glean some fascinating and insightful information from the personalities behind the top game titles..

One thing you can always count on with a Sendai Media Group magazine is fearless and candid reviews of the latest hardware and software, and NUKE is no different. Reviews are done in the familiar four-person format of *EGM*, and include the same level of no-nonsense candor that gives avid gamers honest feedback.

The Tricks Section is a unique and cool touch, and discloses cool Easter Eggs and nifty hints for games on all the different platforms.

Ultimately, NUKE succeeds in covering all the bases in what an online gaming zine should be. If it could stand improving, it would be in the depth of its information.

News: 3
Reviews: 4
Presentation: 4 1/2
Overall: 4

HOW TO MAK

AND ANNIHILA



You've crashed on a strange planet. You quickly strike a deal with your newfound alien buddy, Gaan. You'll help blow away his hostile robot inhabitants. He'll help you get safe passage off the planet. Easier said than done. Together, you'll have to solve deadly puzzles and avoid traps, red slugs, lizards, glass tunnels, acid and sparking cables. You'll go from hauling butt through the forest to blasting into a bomb-filled mine shaft to fighting through an armory to destroy a reactor. It's Alien Odyssey — the PC CD-ROM game with incredibly smooth character animation and Argonaut's exclusive 3D adventure game technology. It's total annihilation. But in a friendly sort of way.

MATURE M

ARGONAUT BRENDER

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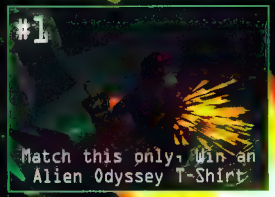
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ALIEN ODYSSEY

PC CD-ROM



PUNCH OUT



PUNCH OUT



PUNCH OUT

See back for complete rules. Game ends 2/15/96.

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ALIEN ODYSSEY

$5 CASH BACK BY MAIL

BUY: One Philips Media ALIEN ODYSSEY Game by 2/15/96

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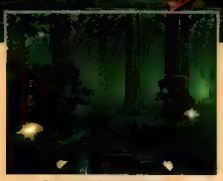
E FRIENDS

TE ENEMIES





Infiltrate the enemy Comm Bunker



Blast robots from your DAK bike.

ALIEN ODYSSEY

PHILIPS

GAMES MASTER

TOUTED AS THE United Kingdom's biggest-selling video game magazine, GamesMaster ***(http://www.futurenet.co.uk/games/gamesmaster.html)*** is truly testing the global village by extending its European reach beyond the print medium and the magazine-based television show of the same name to worldwide exposure on the Internet.

With a blend of good writing and British sensibility (including sentences like, "What the pants is going on?"), the site is fun to read and, at times, can even be moderately informative.

The most entertaining aspect of the site is the review section featuring numerous games on virtually any home system. Titles are rated based on graphics, sound, playability and how long the game will continue to entertain players.

In typical British reporting style, bluntness seems to be the key for the extensive reviews, as reviewers aren't shy about ripping into a new game (and in the case of a *Star Trek* game, poking fun at the overzealous Trekkies themselves).

There are also features on several interesting, but old-news industry topics, as well as recurring articles for fan favorites such as *Mortal Kombat* and *Doom*.

For example, "The Kombat Kolumn" features an article discussing the upcoming *MK3* game (no, not the updated version) with co-creator Ed Boon.



GamesMaster also includes interviews with characters, columns by the game creators and behind-the-scenes photos.

Gaming tips are offered in "The Console-ation Zone," but this section hasn't been kept up very well, having last been modified in February '95.

Rounding out the online publication is subscription information and ways to order back issues, but this space could be much better utilized by articles exclusive to the online magazine or an up-to-date news section. Luckily, there are also links to the magazine's editorial staff, so surfers can offer their own praise and criticisms by e-mail.

News: 1
Reviews: 4½
Presentation: 3½
Overall: 3

JAMMIN' ONLINE

NO ONE KNOWS more about what fans want out of an online magazine better than fans, which is what gives Jammin' Online **(http://pages.prodigy.com/ME/jammin/jammin.html)** an advantage over much of its competition.

Fuelled mostly by game reviews, this not-for-profit site may lack in style, but makes up for it with solid, unbiased writing about the most popular games on the market.

Rated in terms of graphics, sound, control, challenge and level of fun, the reviews are skewed a bit high, but in a very comprehensive manner that gamers can relate to.

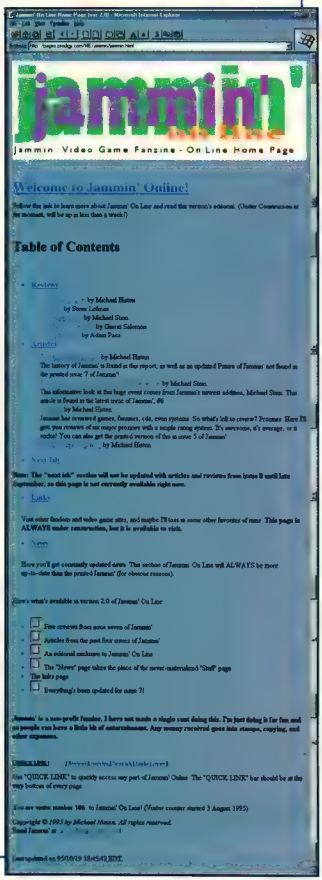
There are feature articles about personal subjects that no one really cares about (except the guys responsible for the online magazine), such as "Jammin' Through Time," a history of the fanzine itself.

There is also some useful reporting from E³ as well as a fan point-of-view editorial on the controversial topic of video-game violence.

A separate news section has been started to replace a miscellaneous stuff page but was unavailable to access at press time. Additionally, past issues of Jammin' can be reviewed as well as a link to other video game-related pages and miscellaneous cool sites courtesy of the editor.

For what the site lacks in flash, it makes up for with enthusiasm and solid writing. Lack of budget keeps the available information more limited when compared to more established magazines, but the reviews are forced to be more selective and possibly more useful to gamers on a budget of their own.

News: N/A
Reviews: 4
Presentation: 2½
Overall: 2 1/2



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NEWTYPE GAMING



WITH AT LEAST two home pages with eye-catching graphics, The NewType Gaming site ***(http://www.newtype.com/NewType/index1.htm)*** looks like an interesting place to stop, but its looks can be deceiving.

Featuring news, articles and and gaming equipment, the site seems to have all the fundamentals of an online gaming magazine covered. Just to be sure, there are also links to game developer home pages, as well as the standard hot list and mailing list.

Then it begins to unravel.

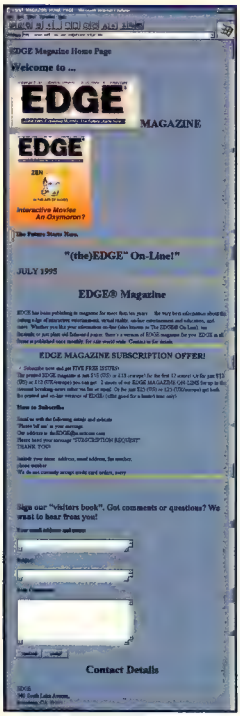
With news dating back to the beginning of August '95 and updated weekly, then biweekly, the maintenance of the site quickly begins to show signs of erosion with no updated news for well over a month.

For gamers that are more interested in entertainment than in the behind-the-scenes working of the video-game industry, unfortunately, text-heavy features such as "The Future of PC Gaming…?" fail to provide much relief.

Written for fluent speakers of technobabble, the article could just as easily been written in ones and zeros for the average Joe, and the only thing most gamers are likely to get out of it is a migraine.

In defense of the site, by regularly investigating topics such as Cyberculture and Virtual Reality, it seems NewType has been geared toward the most PC savvy Net users. However, that is the same audience who values the Internet as a tool for fast information, and the lack of current material renders it useless to its largest potential audience, and the lack of readability and reviews makes it useless for everyone else.

News: 1/2
Reviews: N/A
Presentation: 2 1/2
Overall: 1 1/2



EDGE MAGAZINE

WITH A SNAPPY name and a boast of providing the "very best information about the cutting edge of interactive entertainment" over the last 10 years, the U.K.'s *Edge* magazine ***(http://www.well.com/user/edgehome/edge.html)*** sets itself up on a rather lofty pedestal and its online gaming site simply doesn't deliver.

Unfortunately, the EDGE online site is riddled with trivial self-absorption throughout. If the editors of EDGE had spent as much time gathering hard news and providing cogent analysis of the "cutting edge of interactive entertainment" as they do patting themselves on the back, this site could be much stronger if not at least useful.

As it stands, before you can get to any of the site's few features, gamers are treated to a lesson in self-grandeur that would make Muhammad Ali in his float-like-a-butterfly prime look bashful.

EDGE has feature stories exploring topics like gaming music and virtual reality as well as a couple departments focusing on several games.

However, EDGE in its present online form is not much more than a confusing e-commercial for the print version of the magazine.

Let's say you want some of the latest-breaking gaming news hot off the Internet? Well, this site will be glad to tell you how to order a subscription to the print version of EDGE, which is bound to be chock-full of the stuff as soon as it gets to your mailbox.

What's that? You say you at least want to read a review of the latest PlayStation games? They're nowhere to be found on this site, but if you'll kindly fill out the form and buy their magazine, they have promise to provide you with some really good reviews in there. They promise.

Like a dangerous highway with as many holes in it as solid pavement, perhaps the most promising aspect of this site is that it appears to be under construction. EDGE is promising to soon launch a series of NetGames with an urge for gamers to "check in here at this Web page to play."

What that means remains to be seen, but whatever they decide to add to this site will be an improvement on the currently sparse format.

While the editors at EDGE claim to have been treated to the highest form of flattery by being "blatantly" copied many times over, if its online site truly had been the blueprint for all others to follow, the Internet would have come in with a roar and already gone out with a wimper. EDGE offers nothing special or remotely unique.

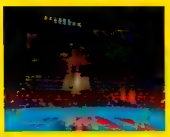
As it stands, the site is far behind other online gaming publications, and if its execution doesn't catch up to its bombastic boasting soon, EDGE's best move will be to throw itself off of one.

News: N/A
Reviews: N/A
Presentation: 1
Overall: 1


YOU TALK.
YOU DANCE.
YOU PLAY HARD TO GET.

THEN YOU TURN

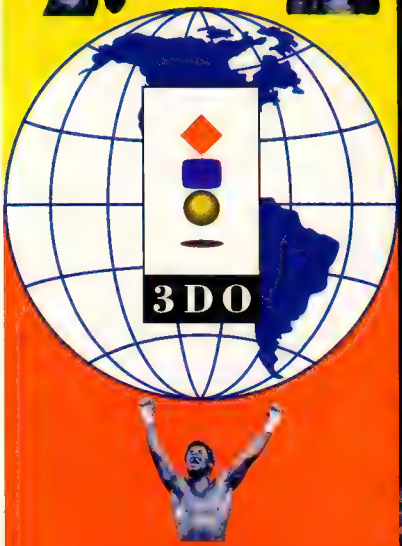




Look through your fighter's eyes. But take a hard one to the head and you may be looking through just one eye. Or your vision will blur.
Or you'll see "red." Worse yet, you could end up seeing double and have to fight two Alis.







Ali never left a face the way he found it.
And with 21 camera angles you see all the action.
TV-style presentation gives you commentary and stats. Now all you need is a trainer.







Re-stage many of boxing's most unforgettable and illustrious fights. Step through the ropes in any one of three modes: career, tournament, or exhibition. 15 different fight features let you customize each championship bout.



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THE LIGHTS OUT.



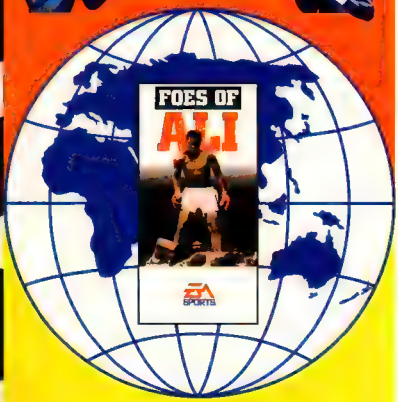




The unique skills of each fighter step into the ring. Ali's blinding speed. Norton's jaw-dropping power. Sonny Liston's punishment to the body. It's all there. Boxing at its best. By the best. For the undisputed heavyweight championship of the world.







Live your dream of stepping into the ring with Muhammad Ali. Or was that a nightmare? Either way, prepare yourself to go nose to fist with one of the greatest fighters of all time.



Fight as Leon Spinks, Ken Norton, Chuck Wepner, Sonny Liston, Henry Cooper, Jimmy Ellis, George Chuvalo, Bob Foster, or Muhammad Ali, himself. Against the computer or another player. Pick carefully. You can float like a butterfly or get stung by a bee.

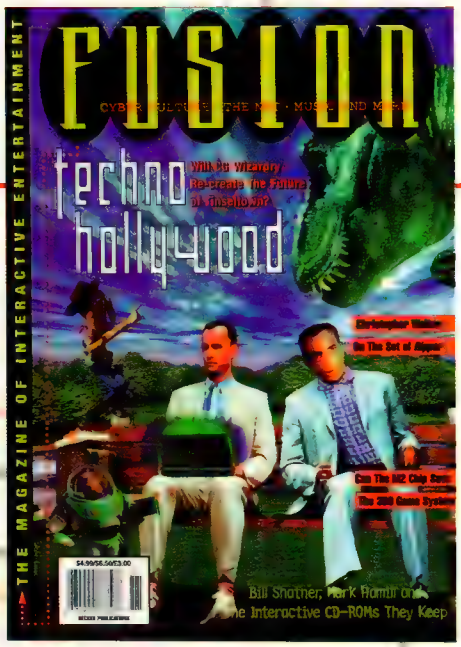


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FOES OF ALI

COORDINATES: WEBMASTER@WWW.TRANSFUSION.COM

External Correspondence



NERVOUS ACTOR

Dear *FUSION*,

As a struggling actor in L.A., I found your piece on Interactive Hollywood extremely interesting. It's hard enough to find small extra roles these days, and the concept of having digitally re-created actors and actresses is frightening. While I haven't broken into any significant roles to date, I find the negative possibilities that CG work could have on the industry to be frightening. On page 47, you mention that *Jurassic Park*'s T-Rex spawned Hollywood's first computer-generated actor. Although Richard Edlund (Boss Films) "hackled," as you wrote, about the possibilities of actors being replaced anytime soon, I recall hearing news about Lucasfilm's *Radioland Murders* in which large crowds of extras were nothing more than a special effect. The same was true for *Braveheart*. Lead actors may not be replaced anytime soon, but for the struggling actor, it eliminates plenty of extra roles. And with lead characters like *Casper* pulling in millions of dollars (at 1/10 the cost of less reliable actors like Kevin Costner), Hollywood can only reap bigger rewards by moving toward CG technology.

I was also fascinated by the idea that actors can record their 3-D image to be re-created for future film roles, even after they've died. We could have more Bogie, George Burns [he's not dead yet Ted] and Danny Kaye. Who needs living actors anymore? So while Edlund scoffs the possibility of actors being replaced, I find it terrifying. Am I being paranoid?

Ted Grey
Los Angeles, CA

Ted, we think what Edlund was "hackling" at was the idea that this technology would replace the actor anytime soon. CG is still infantile, and it's expensive. I'm not sure what your going rate is, but you're probably a lot cheaper than Casper-generated extras. Nothing personal.



PHANTOM PAIN

Dear *FUSION*,

Thank you for the Hollywood Interactive piece, it was the highlight of the whole issue. It's unbelievable what the big movie studios are doing with computer technology. If you take me for example, look at me as the average dumbshit on the street, it's painfully obvious how easy it is to fool me with this kind of technology. Not to mention the embarrassment I experienced when I revealed my ignorance to my date for the evening. I was totally fooled by the masking effect done to actor Gary Sinise's legs. I really thought the guy was without legs! Maybe I need to get out more or at least study up on the latest special-effects technology being applied to film. The possibilities for the ILM application are mind-boggling.

In the future I would like to see more in-depth articles on ILM as the technology evolves.

Sheila Jordan
Chicago, IL

Don't feel bad Sheila, it fooled our copy editors as well.

LOUD AND LUDDITE

Dear *FUSION*,

If I wanted to read about the Internet I would subscribe to *Wired!* Please limit or eliminate altogether the coverage you are currently giving the Net.

Being somewhat of a Luddite (someone who rejects technology), I really am not interested in this so-called information highway, in fact I believe this movement is contributing to the downfall of human interaction. Everybody hunched over their PCs searching for the latest *Penthouse* Web site or some other meaningless quoit of information to amuse themselves for a few minutes before it's eagerly on to the next site like a coked-up ferret. This is interactive!? I don't think so! Interactive is dealing with people face to face, working together in a positive and productive manner to work toward some common goal. What people are doing with AOL and the other Internet services is "cocooning" themselves from the actual world, and immersing themselves in the bogus "virtual world" of their computers!

Even though my beliefs shun this technology, I cannot say it is not without its attributes. Information is power and it certainly doesn't hurt to have this tool if it is used properly and in the context of what it really is, a tool. But when it becomes a person's primary means of communication and interaction, it puts a cold slant on human relations. For example, if you want to communicate with me, don't ask me to e-mail you. Screw that, just pick up the phone and call. I can't stand all this e-mail bullshit, I don't want to deal with it at all.

I'm sure you don't want a personal tirade I just wanted to voice my opinion concerning the inevitable onslaught of Internet madness.

Allen Smithy
Branden, UT

Allen, you bring up some very interesting points. What we try to do with FUSION *is present information to our readers as a guide to what is evolving in the interactive entertainment field. We can't predict the future of human relations, but we certainly hope, as you do, that people have a life and don't use the Internet as a substitute for real-life experiences.*

CLINTON CUT-UP

FUSION,

Way to go with the Operation Clinton. It looks like hours of fun. In fact, the piece reminded me of a version of the game that my wife and I subsequently unearthed in the attic, which from the amount of dust on it, hadn't been used in years. The battery connection is broken and I can't find half the pieces but ahh, the memories. Mexican Economy, very funny. I enjoyed the magazine a lot, especially the techno Hollywood piece and the Ripper story, despite the gore. My wife and I do have a suggestion to help the magazine though. Why not make the features shorter and break them up into subsections? I like most of the subject matter but occasionally we find the features a bit much to digest in one sitting.

Howard Malankovich
Seattle, WA

Howard, don't forget about Scruples for Congress. It's nearly as entertaining. As for the feature suggestion, well...okay.





FALL OUT

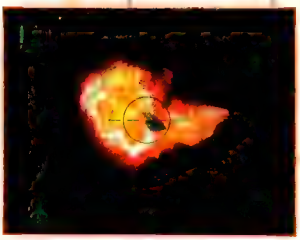
JUST PLAIN DAZED

Dear *FUSION*,

Wing Commander is my absolute favorite game in the world. I was quite pleased to catch a glimpse of *Wing IV* in your November issue. That game got me through some hard times back when I was on drugs and had no direction in life to speak of. In fact, my main goal every day (back then) was to get stoned and battle Kilrathi until my mom would beat on my bedroom door fuming. I usually kept right on playing until she would jimmie the door open with a kitchen knife and pull the plug on the ol' Gateway 2000. Not to worry though, I always saved my game before she could get to the power cord. To keep her happy, I would say I was going to a job interview but I'd really go down to the Electronics Boutique and check out all the new games and chat with Connie, the owner.

Ah, those were the days all right. Now I'm a productive member of the working world. I finally got a job at...you guessed it—EB. I'm a certified game junkie now but at least I get paid to do this. I couldn't be happier. Keep the good stuff coming *FUSION*.

Peter Hobbs
Springfield, OH



Remember Peter, take it one day at a time, man.

MORE GAMES

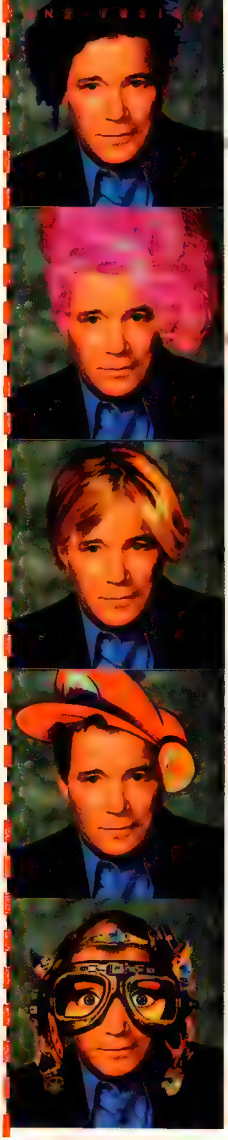
FUSION,

I believe your magazine could benefit from having many more game reviews, in particular more on the Sony PlayStation due to the recent release of that killer platform. I can't think of a reason why anyone would buy anything but a PlayStation at this time. It goes without saying that most other systems, with the exception of the Sega Saturn, are on their way out of the systems race. I'm not even counting the 3DO as a contender anymore even though it gave a valiant effort in the beginning. The 3DO has suffered from poor marketing and a general lack of challenging games to support the act, but don't listen to me, I'm just a 16-year-old game geek! But I know what I like, and it is the Sony PlayStation.

Ron Johnson
Cliffton Forge, VA

Well Ron, we like the PlayStation too and will continue to give it a liberal amount of coverage due to its popularity at this time, but don't count out all the other viable console systems available at this time.





KING OF CHEESE

Dear *FUSION*,

William Shatner really is the King of Cheese, but I have to admit I like the guy and admire what he has done with his life. No other actor out there could, so eloquently, pull off the role of the commander of the big ol' starship so convincingly, certainly not Patrick Stewart (Picard). He didn't score with half as many alien chicks as Kirk did.

I guess I really did not like the *TJ Hooker* role that much but Shatner was just out of his element—space, so I will give him that one anyway. I enjoyed reading about his latest endeavor, *TekWar*. It's obvious Shatner doesn't know a thing about computers or computer games but he has such a childlike approach to the medium that it's almost refreshing to witness. A lot of older people could take a lesson from Shatner in approaching computers with an open mind. It is so cliché for people to say, "I couldn't run a computer if I had to." Hey, if Bill can do it, so can you.

By the way, seeing Shatner with all the different hairstyles was hilarious to say the least. My favorite was the large pink monstrosity.

Recently when Shatner was on the Letterman show, he stated he lobbied to keep *TekWar* on the non-violent side. I must object: The game is violent, almost on the gory side. I don't think the game designers took his advice on that matter.

Oh well, it's still a cool game. I look forward to my next issue of *FUSION*.

Dwight Sellers
Boston, MA

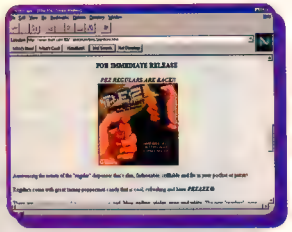
Shatner can pull off any role with any hairstyle, any time.

FUSION

Thanks, everyone, for writing. We welcome your letters and e-mail and beer money donations—the more the merrier! Send your snail mail to: . . . Fall Out c/o *FUSION* 1920 Highland Suite 222 Lombard, IL 60148 Webmaster@WWW.Transfusion.COM

PEZ POWER

http://www.spectrumnet.com/~spectrum/pez/index.html



In what warped world does Miss Piggy tip a wink to Dino, and Speedy Gonzales bump up against the likes of Winnie the Pooh? It's not a Hanna-Barbera or a Warner Bros. site, but rather Burlingame, Calif.'s Online PEZ Exhibit, located at ***http://www.spectrumnet.com/~spectrum/pez/index.html***, which allows the characters of different cartoon universes to hobnob in style.

Kids have been weirdly enchanted with PEZ's unique dispensation since 1952, when the cartoon heads were introduced. We at *FUSION* theorize that it's not so much the flavor of chalky fruit-flavored pellets that attract its loyal fans as the perverse thrill of tipping back a hapless throat and dipping in for the sugary kill. This vampiric pleasure is perhaps heightened by the fact that the limbless figurines are unable to protest their fate. This can be remedied through the online purchase of PEZ BODY PARTS. No, it's not a bunch of obscenely dismembered arms and legs. It's a collection of sanitized snap-on bodies in eight styles such as Caveman, Skeleton, and Hockey Player.



It's only natural that people obsessed with a kitschy candy would find a congenial home on the Net. The maintainers of the site have even stockpiled some rare PEZ figurines such as Captain Hook and the Practical Pig and are reselling them online. Die-hard fans can also register for the gala 1996 PEZ Convention. So tip back a little sugar brick and get wired; this thing ain't just for kids anymore.

WEB SITE OF THE MONTH

Grab-n-hands

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— Diehard Game Fan

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Gremlin

REACH OUT

the top 5 music web sites...

http this:



Beavis and Butt-head's favorite band GWAR have a site at: http://www.iuma.com/gwar/) that's anything but for the squeamish. The site features ultraviolent, blood and guts comic-book installments both starring and illustrated by the band. For those new to GWAR, a biography section introduces the band and the other characters of the comic book. In terms of tunes, the GWAR site also features sound bites in various sizes to suit both weak and super PCs.

At the eerie Sister Machine Gun site (http://www.smg.org/index.html) fans of the band are treated to an experience that truly affects the senses. With choices of eyes, ears or mind, Net users (or victims, as the band refers to them) will find interviews, reviews and Lisa Randall's yummy pasta recipes. There's also a photo gallery and words of wisdom from the band including, "Don't take requests." The impressive-looking site is tops on the Web with a nice mix of humor and music that'll appeal to almost anyone.





Long live the Dead with their over 40 dedicated fan sites. While every spot has its merits and utilities, from a miracle (ticket) exchange to a non-profit site designed to spread the Dead's message (they had one?), the Grateful Dead Almanac (http:// www.well.com/user/almanac/) has impressive poster artwork to download along with song lyrics. Included with the overwhelming Dead-head presence on the Net are over 20 sites in honor of the band's spiritual leader, the late, great Jerry Garcia.

In their continuing bid to mount a comeback, big-hair rockers Bon Jovi (http://www.polygram.com/bon-jovi/ BonJovi.html) take to the Net with an impressive site that begins with an interesting feature allowing users to check out a Bon Jovi biography in either English or Spanish. A personal touch is added by including handwritten Jon Bon Jovi song lyrics from their latest album as well as exclusive sound and video clips from Lie to Me that MTV hasn't even seen yet. There is also a section where the boys discuss their inspiration for the video as well as fan club information.





A pirate looks at cyberspace in Jimmy Buffett's Margaritaville site (http://key-west.com/cgibin/var/discover/margaritaville/index.html) and speaks of the days when Parrothead fans were first among those posting letters on the Net. With links to his Coconut Telegraph newsletter and an address to send e-mail, the site is good ol' fun. Parrothead madness can be found on other sites, most worthily, The Church of Buffett, Orthodox (http://www. homecom.com/mhall/ cobo/).

Honorable Mentions: David Bowie (http://www.davidbowie.com/) Complementing his new album, Outside, Bowie illustrates the inspiration for the album by including the non-linear, Gothic story, "The Nathan Adler Diaries." Cyberfavorites, The Beastie Boys (http://www.nando.net/music/gm/BeastieBoys/) also have an impressive site featuring news, audio and video clips, with a screen saver site that can be downloaded to show Beastie-heads bouncing around inside your computer.

"...the most intense pinball experience that you can get outside an arcade."
Chris Gore
Computer Player

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Codemasters


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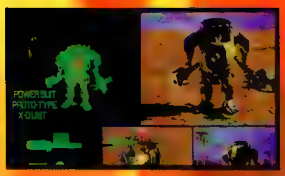


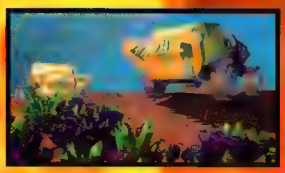
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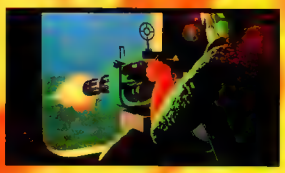
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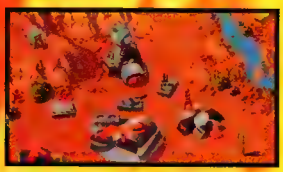
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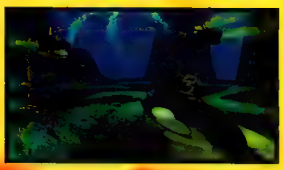












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SONY

PlayStation

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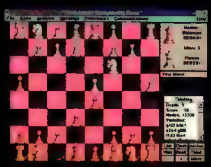


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The NET GENERATION

Online services give gaming a whole new modem operandi

Like thick-headed golden retrievers, gamers have continually chased and been duped by the imaginary sticks-and-bone promises thrown by online developers. The press' familiar refrain, "It's right around the corner," is making for one rather large corner, and overhyped technology like the CyberMaxx and the Virtual Boy have only aggravated an already bristled public.

Who are gamers specifically booing these days? Well, the technically cool Worlds Online Chat is slowly losing its appeal while *Neverwinter Nights* gets assailed from belligerent gamers for lack of continual update. And the number of unforgiving people ready to lynch Kesmai over minor imperfections in *Air Warrior* is comically astounding.

It's really a shame that only now, when online gaming is truly at the cusp of breakthrough development, that jaded gamers are dismissing word of advancement as "crying wolf." Sure, gamers have a right to be skeptical, but to be fair, let's also recognize that for a medium that didn't exist six years ago, there's plenty to be proud of; with aggressive start-ups like TEN, and quality development from the likes of Domark, *FUSION* is willing to bet that 1996 is going to be a very interesting (revolutionary?) year indeed.

– by the Editors of FUSION





A Brief History of Online



The Internet, as is no mystery, was first designed by the Defense Department to ensure the transmission of (e)mail after the bomb dropped. Primarily oriented toward techwonks and text transmission, the Internet is both hard to use and not very well suited for moving visual information. No problem for professional procrastinators who, with too much time on their hands, developed the beloved MUD or Multiple User Dungeons (some people try to dress it up by calling these software creations Multiple User Dialogues, but yes, it was originally Dungeons) If you remember the old text-adventure games of a bygone era, e.g , *Zork*, you can understand the essence of a MUD. Everything runs in text.

As computing became more sophisticated, the Net saw the development of the World Wide Web. Nuclear war, thankfully, was not the impetus behind it, but rather, a need for a system that could transmit scientific information simply enough for computer-illiterate scientists. Well, as anyone with a pulse knows, the Web caught on as far more than just a research tool. And as with the Internet, the Web quickly became a stomping ground for gamers.

Yet like the Internet, the Web was and still is poorly suited for gaming. In fact, in some ways it's worse than the Internet in dealing with games. Whereas the Internet knows its limits and isn't suited for anything but text games, the Web is graphically oriented with point-and-click capabilities so that it has some of the hallmarks of a much richer gaming environment. Unfortunately, these markings are slightly misleading. The Web was originally designed to get text and pictures to users, but it wasn't designed to receive inputs (beyond the nifty point-and-click navigation) from users.

This whole one-way information thing has been improved since the Web's introduction with added features like HTML Web protocol, to allow people to talk back, if only a little. And that is where we stand now. Users can interact with the Web by filling out simple forms, and the Web can send users pictures, graphics and with the right add-ons, even sound.

Clear and Present Data

While some interesting game offerings exist on the Web, including the *Web Maze* and *Virtual Vegas*, those programs exhibit the limits of a clunky half-step in interactive technology. And that's where VRML and Java come into the picture.



VRML (Virtual Reality Markup Language), is simply a standard for allowing computers to communicate over the Web, but instead provides three-dimensional worlds. By sending position information along with data, VRML constructs online spaces that allow a user to move around and view objects from different angles—like real life, only with much hokier visuals.

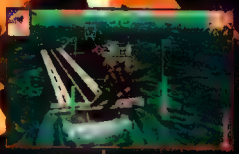
The other program of consequence is Java. It works in an entirely different way from traditional HTML. Instead of having information flowing between the server and the client, the data being transferred is programming code. When the code gets to the user's end of the line, it creates a program that runs instantaneously. Raise your arms in exaltation because this is the *big* banana in online progress. Instead of relying on the server to feed data, the server simply sends a module, called an applet, to the user machine and makes that computer do all the work This allows a player's computer to interact genuinely in a gaming arena. Need a game engine? Get it as an applet and start playing. Want to add joystick support? Add an applet. Need a new sound driver for your card? Applets to the rescue. This is distributed computing over the Net. Combine Java with VRML (soon just another applet, eh?) and it becomes an all-season gaming engine.

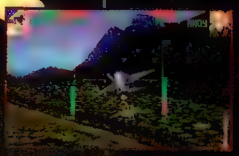
Probably the most important feature of VRML and Java, from the gaming public's starved point of view, is that they are available now The Netscape 2.0 browser, currently in beta release, supports Java while VRML is gaining momentum from a couple of big applications that are already out there So although the hype of Net gaming has slightly overstepped reality's boundaries, the motherload payoff is in sight for you malcontents.

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A Perfect Ten?

The Total Entertainment Network raises online gaming from the primordial depths of MUD







Nestled within the rolling knolls of San Francisco, aspiring to become something of an MTV for the interactive entertainment world, the 50 or so developers at TEN (the Total Entertainment Network) know where the future of gaming lies: online. Pushing their graphically impressive and easily navigatable interface, TEN's visionary pair, Daniel Goldman and Janice Linden-Reed, are poised to enlighten what has been an otherwise medieval network gaming pit.

"We're truly multiplayer," promises David King, TEN's chief technology officer; having secured deals with over 18 content providers, TEN will offer subscribers access to gaming experiences as diverse as playing chess with a single opponent to a 16-player free-for-all in games like *Duke Nukem*. Additionally, TEN will offer Web access, e-mail, private paging, customizable overlays, chat rooms, electronic 'zines and a vitally cool "persistent environment." Becoming totally galvanized, King's voice raises an octave as he explains in a single breath, "A good example of a persistent environment is *SimCity*. In *SimCity*, you build up your neighborhood, you leave and you're done, and you say, 'This is great! I made my mark.' And then you come back the next day and vandals have gotten in and just bulldozed half your stuff. It's a persistent environment because it continues even when you're not there. So what we're doing is moving to a

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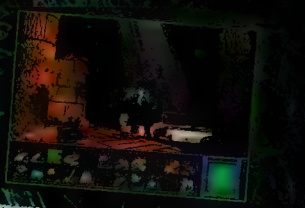
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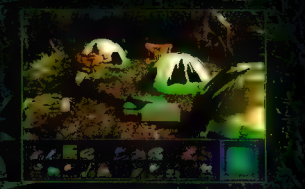
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perpetual environment."

King also depicts *Doom*-like environments where players won't be hunting down the vile minions of hell, but rather, playing a virtual paintball war of sorts against others who have entered the gaming dungeon. Now, add to that, real-time audio: Imagine hearing your opponent's bated breath as you near an ambush, or his petulant curses as you blow away his virtual chest cavity. Streaming sound isn't an option yet, but will be according to King, who also predicts the eventual streaming of live video.



AOL, GEnie and CompuServe are trying to offer a few competing multiplayer games, but for the most part, they're just overpromoted and overblown.



"In order to really enjoy good online combat," says King, "multiplayer games need to have latencies that are low. Whenever you do an action, it takes half a second to get a reaction on AOL or GEnie. Their technology is really 20 years old." Don't be surprised if TEN is somehow incorporated into AOL and other game-needy services in the near future.



There's one attribute, however, that TEN will attempt to adopt from AOL and other online services, and that's a sense of community. Says Linden-Reed, TEN's content editor, "The problem I've found with Web pages is there is no community. Our long- term goal is to add creative tools, ways in which people can talk to one another and play with all of this technology."

The real trick for TEN though, will be figuring out a way to expand their multiplayer service beyond the boundaries of the contiguous U.S. for inclusion of an international community. "That's not a problem," says VP of Technical Development Chris Torkildson. "We've looked at what we need to do to put a server in Japan. Players would still come in over the Internet, so the technical is not the issue. The business issue always takes much longer. A lot of questions need to be answered about international tariffs and things."



So is it a perfect TEN? Not quite yet, but Torkildson is working on the gremlins that are still causing troubles for the holiday-planned service launch (now in beta testing). "When you're working with the state of the art," he laughs knowingly, "the art tends to break down some of the time."

The biggest problem TEN has encountered thus far, has been with the multiplayer operability. "But we're now able to deal with that," says Torkildson. "People have to see you move when you move. Someone has to keep track of and send out all of the information to make that happen. With multiple objects, it can eat up bandwidth pretty quick. To reduce that problem, the software has to get a lot smarter and start figuring out who can see what. It takes a lot of hardware and artificial intelligence software to make it work.

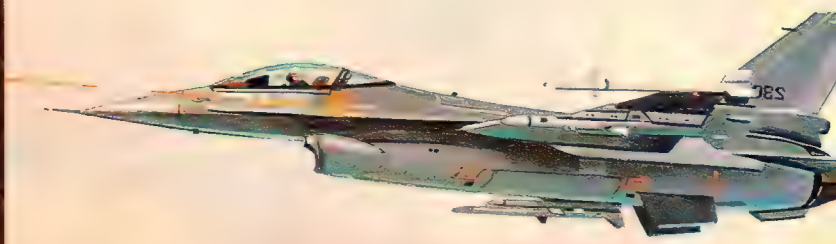
"Also, the problem is with the inconsistency of the networking capability around the country. Some places are super and some are awful. Last week, it was bad in Baton Rouge and this week it was great." Good for Baton Rouge. It'll be fun to take on a few confederates. So now that your network is up and running, make sure your equipment is primed for action. Torkildson suggests: a Pentium 90, 15 Megs, 4X CD-ROM, 28.8 Modem, VGA and a 15-inch monitor.

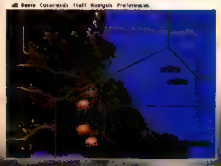
Now that your gaming accoutrements are in order, it's up to TEN to get the ball rolling. Be assured that they're proceeding as quickly as possible to move online. Half tittering, half yawning, a caffeinated Torkildson promises that his programmers are on the job double time. "Sleep, who needs sleep? This is a start-up company." Wearily he adds, "I think we're ahead, but who knows what's in someone's garage?"

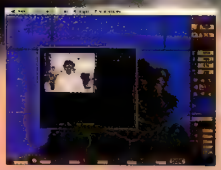


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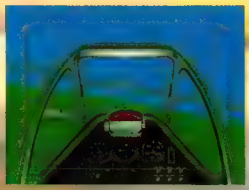
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Profile of an Online Pilot

The Making of Confirmed Kill





Considering he's a University of Tennessee aerospace engineering major, you can understand Domark Software's satisfaction in having programmer Brian Walker on staff. Now add to Walker's resume seven years of being all he could be as an Apache attack helicopter pilot, and you can understand why Domark is tongue-twisted over having their high-flying ace develop the new online flight simulator, Confirmed Kill.

Having seen combat duty during Desert Storm, Walker is something of a rarity in the industry: a designer whose research is infallibly real. And taking a short leave of absence to speak with FUSION about his new tour of duty, here's Walker on the latest in multiplayer combat gaming:

Q What do you feel you're able to bring to the game from your flight experience?

A I think it's the ability to bring a gut-level feeling into a game, that's my major goal. I know what it's like. It's something of a nightmare for me to know the world believes that the military Tom Clancy describes actually exists. Too often we wind up with the quandry of trying to describe an elephant to a blind man.

Q What goes into the process of creating an online game?

A Initially, you have to decide if you want a persistent environment game, [like] *Cyberstrike*, [where] a host code or machine actually runs the game 24 hours a day. Or you [may] want to run a temporary environment game, like *Red Baron* on the Sierra Network where there's no constant activity. You show up in a fishbowl world and as soon as you leave that world, the game ends.

Once you decide if you want a persistent or temporary environment game, you figure out what your demographics are going to be and what kind of game concept you're looking at.

Q A beta-testing version of Confirmed Kill went online as a persistent environment. What were the results?

A Unfortunately, the persistent environment has proven not to be what we envisioned, for the case of that game. Unfortunately, the user numbers have been dropping during the beta test.

One of the biggest problems are people who just absolutely terrorize new players. They circle over an airfield and shoot down people as soon as they show up on the runway, and there's nothing anybody can do. What kind of motivation is there to play again?

Q How do you intend to combat that?

A We're looking at doing a complete reformat of the entire *Confirmed Kill* concept, where players can meet in a lobby, divide into teams as they want, join friends, select scenarios, select aircraft to fly with them and then fly a canned scenario that has several random features built into it. Players will start within range of each other, in altitude, in the air and then they can fight. So you have minimum setup and flying time [and] maximum action.

Before we didn't know what worked. Now, we know exactly what doesn't work. What we're looking at now is just about as close to a photo-realistic simulation as you can get.

Q What else will the new version have?

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Old Faithfuls

The mainstream press has been focussing largely on the Internet and the Web, even while those mediums are slowly coming into their own in regard to gaming.

Presently, there are some interesting sites, but the Net offerings to date are few in number and most are weak in playability. What is a poor gamer to do? Well, the best gaming has been on the wires for quite some time from the major commercial online providers, particularly GEnie, CompuServe and AOL.

Air Warrior (GEnie)

With WWII as the backdrop in Kesmai's *Air Warrior*, gamers fly missions both with and against other players in a very realistic 3-D environment.

Air Warrior boasts support of the advanced joysticks and pedals that go part and parcel with the serious flight sim fanatic. Presently, it's the only real multiplayer flight sim online. Others offer tete-a-tete play, but only *Air Warrior* creates an arena for hundreds of players.



Neverwinter Nights (AOL)

Neverwinter Nights is your basic fantasy adventure game where a passel of spells are available for the magically inclined and party combat against multiple monsters is the order of the day. The view is a 3/4-overhead isometric with solid VGA graphics.

Note: This is a multiplayer game—gone is the full party control of the stand-alone games. The player in *NWN* takes on the persona of a single character and bands together with other players to form parties. Chat commands exist, allowing players to talk to each other, coordinate their actions and sometimes engage in a little player vs. player action.

MechWarrior (GEnie)

MechWarrior is a port of the old Activision game of the same name, and plays almost identically. In *MechWarrior*, the player is the pilot of a multi-ton battle mech, a giant armored robot that goes out in military formation just looking for a little grindage. Using lasers, missiles and other weapons of mass destruction, the battle mech takes on other competitors in long series of battles with planetary control at stake.

As the players win battles, they gain more military responsibility, finally commanding the actions of entire units of other players. Another battle venue, the planet Solaris, allows advanced players to fight with more challenging players.

Best of the Rest

Check out GEnie's mystery game *Modus Operandi*, and robot jock-fest, *CyberStrike*; also CompuServe's squadron tactical, *Sniper*, and *Air Traffic Controller*. *Island of Kesmai* is a strong fantasy text game. AOL offers *Rabbitjack's Casino*, *Federation* and *Gemstone III*. Visit Virtual Vegas for sim-gambling (*http://www.virtualvegas.com/*). Chess strategists will pawn over GNU Chess (*http://www.cz/ cgi-bin/ chess*).



Your Name is MUD

People-text games are by far the most popular of online activities. All of them boast hundreds of varied commands for players, ranging from casting spells to winking and whispering in another player's ear. While hours and dollars tend to add up, those who have learned to use the complicated command structure, know that nothing else comes close to MUD gaming.

And while almost all MUDs connected to the Net are free, most of them aren't very user-friendly. Newbies tend to be scorned until they learn how to play the game well. So how do you learn to play and hook up to MUDs? First, become familiar with the general command structure and find out what is and isn't accepted. A good place to start is the MUD Frequently Asked Questions list. A copy is located at *http://www.lysator.liu.se:7500/ mud/main.html*. Secondly, use the MUD list at Lysator to go to a MUD and poke around a bit. Typing the command Help will provide a list of the commands for the MUD and offer some advice on how to get started.

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Gaming's Manifest Destiny

The onetime thrill of beating the living bejeezus out of a computer opponent has since evanesced as gamers prefer the norepinephrine kick of locking arms with other live video game combatants. Realizing the shift in trend, game developers have begun, just barely, to cater to online gamers who want to take on the world. Still in its infant stages, expect several of the console juggernauts to begin work on Internet play.

Console Connections

Sega has already announced work on their Saturn Internet, planned for a March '96 release and connection to NIFTY-Serve (Fujitsu's Japanese PC online service). "Ubiquity has proven what it can do if you have a brand that can sustain the kind of diversity that we're looking for," explains Sega's VP of marketing, Mike Ribero. "Sega's objective is, wherever there is a viable platform for participation, we are going to seek to exploit it." Interested American users will have to wait till fourth quarter '96 before accessing Saturn Internet.

Philip's CD-i, in association with CD-Online, are in development with a service that hopes to bring the Internet to the television. Of course, a CD-i player will be required hardware for the connection, as well as a 14.4 modem, and a subscription to CD-Online. The U.K. will get first whack at the service this holiday season. Those silly Brits need only place a CD disc in the CD-i player, and click "LogOn," to achieve complete Internet access.

XBand's PC Matchup

Those wily ones at Catapult are at it again, now with XBand PC, a Windows 95-based online network that looks to deliver fast-paced action gaming to users who want that real-time competitive experience. Logging on via modem, XBand PC users enter a main screen where they need only press "Challenge" to connect to a list of potential adversaries. The first available titles will be Accolade's *HardBall 5*, Capcom's *Super Street Fighter II* and Zombie's *Locus*.

Headset Hotrod

Virtual-reality product supplier, VictorMaxx Technologies, has inked an agreement with Steve Jackson Games Incorporated to produce the tentatively titled, *Autoduel*, for online, headset play. Based on Steve Jackson's popular *Car Wars* line games, VictorMaxx hopes to soup up an altogether unimpressive line of gaming peripherals. Will VictorMaxx run out of gas with *Autoduel*? We'll know in late 1996 when online race car drivers test their mettle against other nationally matched opponents.

The Network Limits

Don't be alarmed, it's not your computer monitor—it's MGM's new *Outer Limits* multiplayer online game that has control of your system. Based on the studio's updated version of the classic spook series, up and over 5,000 users will be able to enter the World's Inc.-developed gaming realm sometime midyear '96. Details of how the online game will actually run is as beclouded as the television show itself: In order to enter the *Outer Limits*, players must take on a digital persona, or an "avatar," at which time he or she can experience a mysterious and utterly bizarre interactive realm. Check out updated information at *www.mgmua.com/outerlimits/doors.html*.





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The Online Hereafter

The Future of Gaming



Constant clatter about online entertainment is making multiplayer gaming the next entrepreneurial hotbed. Programmer Brian Walker is particularly excited about new 3-D cards that Domark is using to produce quantum leaps in gaming performance. "Basically, we're looking at doubling, even tripling the frame rate in many instances. They just represent an unbelievable leap over the standard visa driver." Rapid technological improvements, e.g. 3-D chips, have also led Angel Studios' Brad Hunt to believe that the future of gaming will shift online within the next five years. "For now, it's cool to have a supercomputer on your TV that works well. But once networks are in place, I assume people will not want to buy and own memory and horsepower, but rather, rent it." Westwood Studio's co-founder and Senior VP, Louis Cassell, is a little more doubtful about a decline in console gaming within the next five years. "It's the same question people asked me many years ago—if I thought that Nintendo, because of its immense popularity, would destroy the gaming market for PCs. I'm excited by the growth of the whole online community, but I don't think it will ever really supplant console or PC games." Instead says Cassell, "I believe the PC and the console will likely evolve closer and closer until the two are indistinguishable." And with CD-i Online and Saturn Internet, that's a very distinct, if not probable, estimation.

For Your Eyes Only



More radical and perhaps more intuitive than today's technological bellwethers, are the envisages of modern science-fiction authors. William Gibson's vision of cyberspace is an obvious example of literature anteceding technology; but the writings of Neal Stephenson and Bruce Sterling perhaps are better applicable to today's gaming industry.

In Stephenson's *Snowcrash*, high-definition goggles display images at a resolution of 2000 pixels per inch, whereas Sterling, in his tales about "specs," writes of machines reduced to the bare minimum of their components, as objects, like normal-looking glasses that are capable of projecting visuals onto lenses and of playing high-quality sound through tiny speakers in the ear pieces.

Once again, literature has anteceded science—those visionary eyepieces are currently under development, and they're nearly as good as Stephenson and Sterling imagined. Researchers working out of the University of Washington's Human Interface Technology Laboratory are designing a new kind of virtual headset that'll put current hardware manufacturers, Virtual i-o's i-glasses and Forte's VFX1, to shame. Rather than display images on a screen inside the headset, these virtual goggles utilize a laser diode that actually draws images directly onto the user's retina. By the end of the next decade, the VR device might obtain resolution quality near that of the human eye. Talk about an intense gaming experience—jack the glasses into a port on your computer and disappear inside your mind. ●

Contributing writers: John Withers, Rob Bernstein, & Joe Fielder

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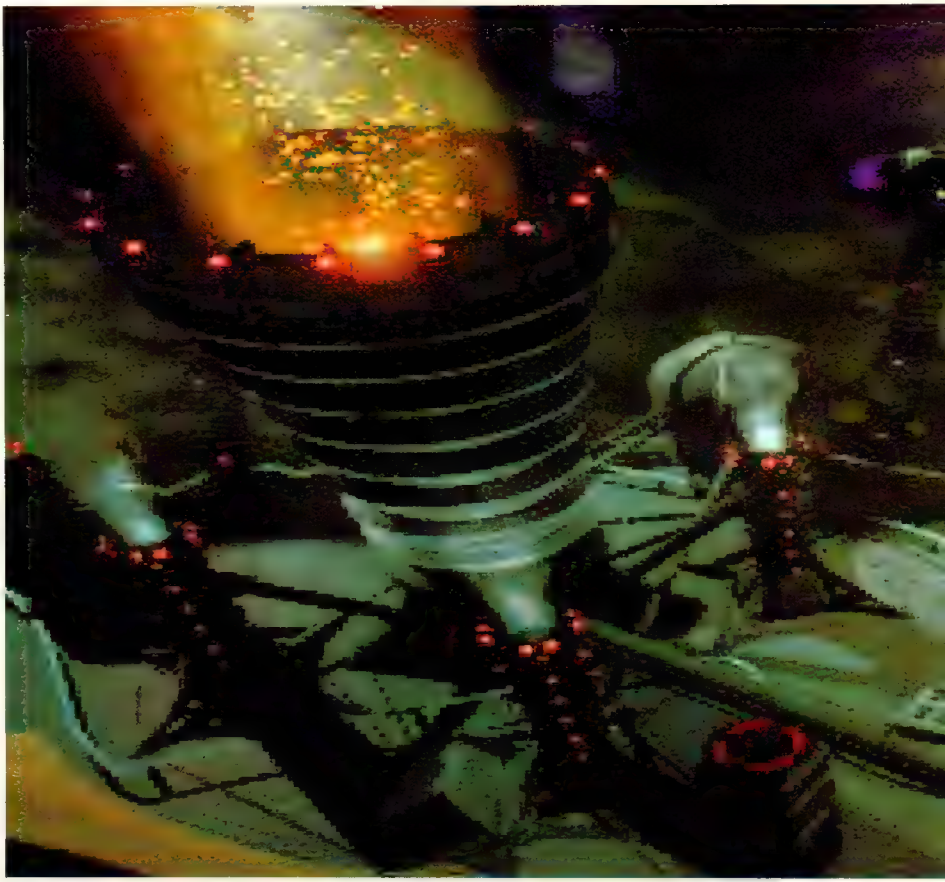
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-By Steve Kent

Blurring the line between video and games

Digital Pictures' Tom Zito takes full-motion video to the next level



Few games have affected the history of computerized entertainment as much as *Night Trap*, a goofy and misunderstood game originally released for the Sega CD. Remember, less than 1 million Sega CD units have been sold in the U.S., yet Congress chose to single out *Night Trap* as a prime example of video game violence.

In 1993, the U.S. Senate held a special investigation of video-game violence in an effort to protect America's youth from products like *Night Trap*, a game that pokes fun of horror movies. During the investigation, senators interrogated the president of Nintendo on national television. They eventually endorsed a video-game rating system. Today, we can all sleep a bit more soundly, protected from subversive games by a rating system.

What made *Night Trap* so dangerous? It showed idiot fledgling vampires attacking a girl in a night gown with a power-drill device. There's no blood, just a scantily dressed girl screaming and wiggling. When a British film board reviewed the game, they gave it the equivalent of a PG rating.

The funniest part of this story is that because of its price and poor graphics, the Sega CD system never made it into many homes. *Night Trap*, which only played on the Sega CD, might have faded into history if the Senate subcommittee had not made it into a minor best seller. The added attention brought huge new sales to an almost extinct game—50,000 copies were sold in a single week, and Zito became recognized as a major player in the video game industry.

Meet the man who made the violence.

Few people have complimented Tom Zito more effectively than his detractors. He has been called the "Corman of Interactive Movies," a name he proudly accepts. (Roger Corman produced dozens of low-budget horror films full of silly stories, bad acting and attractive women.) Best known for his full-motion video (FMV) games, Zito has been in the computer game business since the mid '80s.

A lifelong movie buff, Zito studied cinematography under Martin Scorsese at New York University. He changed majors and schools before graduating, and finished his education as a philosophy major at Georgetown University. Zito graduated third in his class.

Upon graduating, he was hired by the *Washington Post* and given the coveted assignment of covering rock concerts. He was the youngest reporter ever hired by the newspaper. As his reporting matured, Zito's expertise expanded to include the toy industry and video games. Pretty soon he began writing for other publications including *Rolling Stone* and *The New Yorker*.

"I met Nolan [Bushnell, creator of *Pong*, founder of Atari and Chuck E. Cheese, and father of the video-game industry] at a party at Bob Woodward's house," recalls Zito. "I wound up writing a *New Yorker* profile on Nolan and we sort of stayed in touch. In November of '84, Nolan called me up and said 'Hey, I'm starting up a toy company and I'd like you to come be my vice president of marketing.'

"That was how I got involved in this industry."

As the vice president of Axlon Toys, Zito oversaw the production of technology-based toys such as a line of puppets with photo sensors in their mouths. When you opened the puppets' mouths, the sensors detected



Different Strokes' Dana Plato in Congress' favorite game, Night Trap.

Digital Pictures Gaming Gallery



Sewer Shark
(Sega CD, 3DO)
0i2345

In all fairness, *Sewer Shark* was a four- or five-star game when it was released, but it hardly compares to much later similar games like *Rebel Assault*. In this title, players careen through a high-speed chase, flying through sewers and tunnels. As the first full-motion video game to hit the market, *Sewer Shark* set a standard for speedy video streaming that few games have been able to match. It's a repetitive game, but it was an impressive first effort.

Make My Video
(Sega CD)
0i2345

Tom Zito may redefine cool, but his *Make My Video* CDs, for the Sega CD, were worm food at best. Featuring teeny-bopping heart-throbs like Marky Mark and Criss Cross, these musical tours let you watch and edit MTV videos.

Zito has remarked his *Make My Video* products would have been better had he selected the groups himself. A man with great taste, he swears making a tribute to Marky Mark was the last thing on his mind.



Night Trap
(Sega CD, Sega 32X CD, PC CD-ROM)
0i2345

Despite rumors that this game was about hanging sorority girls on meat hooks, *Night Trap* turns out to be a very lame game. The Ogs, novice vampires, want to drink the blood of a clutch of brainless teenage bimbos, led by Dana Plato (best known for her dramatic tour de force in the '70's sitcom, *Different Strokes*). Instead of stalking the girls in this game, you try to save them. As a member of some kind of SWAT team, you trap Ogs with lame booby traps hidden throughout the house.

Ground Zero, Texas
(Sega CD)
0i2345

How will space aliens invade the Earth? By taking over small-town Texas and making themselves look like drunks, farm hands and dissatisfied homemakers. That's the story behind *Ground Zero, Texas*, a rather wacky science-fiction shoot-'em-up.

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"Interactive television...now there's an interesting thought. What if you could change the way television programs ended?"

-Tom Zito

light and puppets growled or made noises. They also manufactured robotic pets, radio-controlled tanks and a mumbling teddy bear.

In 1985, while working at Axlon, Zito became fascinated with the idea of interactive television. 'Interactive television... now there's an interesting thought. What if you could change the way television programs ended?"

At Bushnell's suggestion, Zito put together a group at Axlon to explore the notion. He hired Steven Russell, creator of the first computer game, and a small team of talented innovators. They developed a prototype based on ColecoVision, a home game system released in the early '80s.

"We finished the design of the ColecoVision machine and added sinkable (synchronized) video. I put together a budget and it looked like it would cost about $7 million to get the machine ready along with a couple of pieces of software. Nolan said, 'If you want to do this, you're going to have to raise the $7 million bucks."

Zito eventually found backing at Hasbro, a company that has long flirted with high technology. "They basically agreed to fund the project with the understanding that they retained all the video-game rights."

After about six months, Zito decided to start his own company. "It became clear that this project was never going to get going under the auspices of Axlon."

Though Zito describes his "divorce" from Nolan Bushnell as painful at the time, both men speak highly of each other. Zito still refers to Bushnell as his mentor.

The term interactive television generally refers to broadcast programs rather than video images played from a computer. Though his work took him away from broadcast media and toward computer games, Zito was the first gamemaker to succeed at producing full-motion video with digitized live action.

Creating the games turned out to be easier than finding a way to sell them. If ever a pioneer strayed too far ahead of the pack for his own good, Tom Zito was that unlucky pioneer. Because digitized video takes up so much storage space, there were no game systems capable of storing his first games in the mid '80s. He could have stored it on a laserdisc in a coin-operated video arcade machine, but Zito decided that these machines broke down too often. He wasn't able to sell his products until Sega released the Sega CD in 1991.

As a movie fanatic, Zito favored making entertaining movies with an informal low-budget feel. He founded Digital Pictures, a company dedicated to making interactive,

Double Switch
(Sega CD)
0i2345

One-time teen idol Corey Haim is trapped in the basement of the zaniest apartment building around. There's a treasure hidden in the building and the crazy tenants are out to steal it.

As a security expert, you help Haim defend the treasure by scanning the building and setting off trap doors, revolving walls and hit-and-run furniture to catch the thieves. Above all else, you must protect the power panel in the basement, otherwise you lose your traps.

There's one problem: It turns out that the tenants are the good guys, and Haim's the thief.

Prize Fighter
(Sega CD and Win 3)
0i231/245

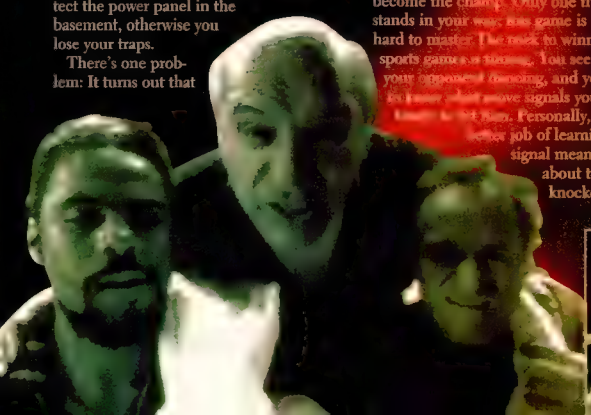
With few exceptions, Zito's games have been B-movies made interactive. *Prize Fighter*, Zito's tribute to *Raging Bull*, is his most serious piece. In this first-person game, you are a young heavyweight, determined to become the champ. Only one thing stands in your way: this game is extremely hard to master. The route to winning Zito's sports game is strong. You see video of your opponent throwing, and you need to know what move signals your opponent is about to throw. Personally, I did a better job of learning which signal means you're about to get knocked out.



Slam City with Scottie Pippen
(Sega CD, 32X, PC CD-ROM)
0i2345

Set in the graffiti-riddled, hip-hop world of jungle ball shoot outs, this back lot basketball brawler puts you in the shoes of a hot-to-trot hoopster with dreams of playing the big time. To get there, you have to beat a muscle-bound lunatic, a smart-mouthed girl with a mean shot and a hot-dogging court fiend.

Though the gameplay in *Slam City* is limited to turn, shoot, drive or lose, the music and attitude of this game are nonstop. There's a cool audience watching you play, and if you win all of your games, Scottie Pippen comes to town to challenge you in a little one-on-one.





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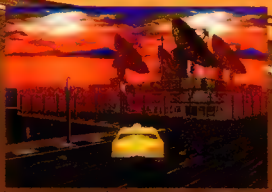
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full-motion-video productions. As the president of Digital Pictures, Zito published games like *Night Trap*; *Ground Zero, Texas* and *Corpse Killer*. These were silly games that combined B-movie stories with arcade shoot-'em-ups.

As the "Corman of Interactive Movies," Zito makes low-brow, low-budget productions. Like Roger Corman, however, Zito has managed to make money with the majority of his games. And he doesn't mind at all being told that he makes "interactive B-movies." He responds simply that "an interactive *Forrest Gump* would be preposterous."

Still making full-motion video games, Zito has worked hard to find new ways to use his technology. This fall, Digital Pictures will release *Quarterback Attack*, a game in which you become a digitized quarterback. "Since the early days with the Nemo Project [the project he did with Hasbro], I've been trying to come up with a way to do a football game. In 1987, I worked on a live-action football game with John Madden. It didn't give you the impact that live video has the ability to deliver. So I've been racking my brains to figure out how you use live video to present the kind of impact that live video has when you're out on the football field."

He came up with a full-motion video game that puts you in the helmet of the quarterback either passing or running the ball on every play.

Digital Pictures will also release an interactive, science-fiction adventure titled *Maximum Surge*, starring *Baywatch* sun goddess Yasmine Bleeth and Walter Keonig, the actor hopefully best known as Chekov from *Star Trek*. Both products will be available for PC computers and CD-based game systems.

According to the Digital Pictures president, the future of the interactive medium will see faster modems, resulting in more multiplayer gaming and new processing power that will lead to even more detailed games. "I think that games will continue to become more realistic as new systems come out with even more processor power. As the PC becomes the platform of choice, you will also see more kinds of games becoming popular."

Zito also released a PC version of *Night Trap*. Part of his marketing effort involved creating a videotape celebrating the sheer lunacy surrounding the congressional investigation of video-game violence. Whether he's creating games or facing critics, Zito enjoys a good laugh, even though some people aren't sure when he's joking.





Corpse Killer
(Macintosh, Sega CD, Sega 32X, 3DO, Saturn)

0i23i/245

In this first-person shooter, you see a zombie-infested Caribbean island through the eyes of a Marine killing machine. With the help of a Rastafarian mercenary and a pretty news reporter, you must fight your way into the fortress of a mad scientist.

With a lame plot, bad acting and ridiculous-looking zombies, this game is actually fun to play. The fast-paced, arcade shoot-outs keep you on your toes. This game is Zito's quintessential interactive B-movie.

Supreme Warrior
(3DO, PC CD-ROM)

0i23i/245

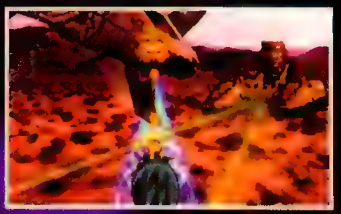
Imagine playing *Mortal Kombat* from a first-person perspective. Tom Zito did, and he named it *Supreme Warrior*. In this hard-to-master, martial-arts extravaganza, you fight a cast of real-life martial artists.

Though this game has quick action and an assortment of colorful fighters, the interface is hard to pick up. Once learned, however, *Supreme Warrior* offers a challenging alternative to side-view fighting games like *Street Fighter II* and *Mortal Kombat*.

Quarterback Attack
(Game unfinished at present)

When it comes to football, Tom Zito's goal is no less than to create the most realistic football game of all time. The digitized graphics of *Quarterback Attack* definitely overpower the computer-animated graphics of every other football simulation. You play this game from within a quarterback's helmet. Unlike other games where you catch your own passes, play defense and punt to boot, in this title you only see the action as a quarterback, and sit out defensive plays. You can pass or run the ball, and there's no shortage of action; but you depend on your teammates to win.

To help create the feel of football, Zito cast the sport's favorite curmudgeon Mike Ditka as the coach in the game.



Maximum Surge
(Unfinished)

In this first-person shoot-out, you help the ever irascable *Baywatch* brunette Yasmine Bleeth and a rag-tag bunch of future rebels take on an evil mad scientist named Drex (played by *Star Trek / Babylon 5/Moon Trap*/every other conceivable science fiction flic alum Walter Keonig). Most of this game is spent shooting mutants and equally distasteful bad guys as you protect Bleeth and free cities from terror. Like most Digital Pictures' productions, *Maximum Surge* has good special effects and a tongue-in-cheek story line.

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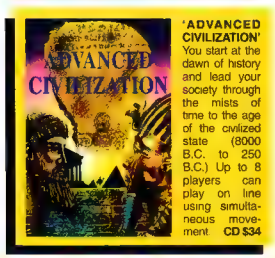
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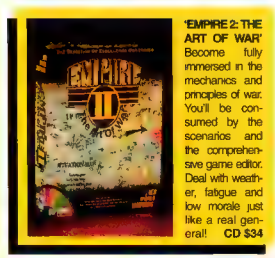
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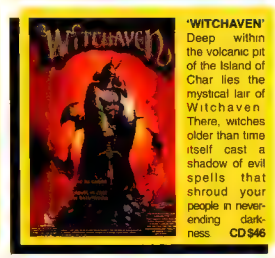
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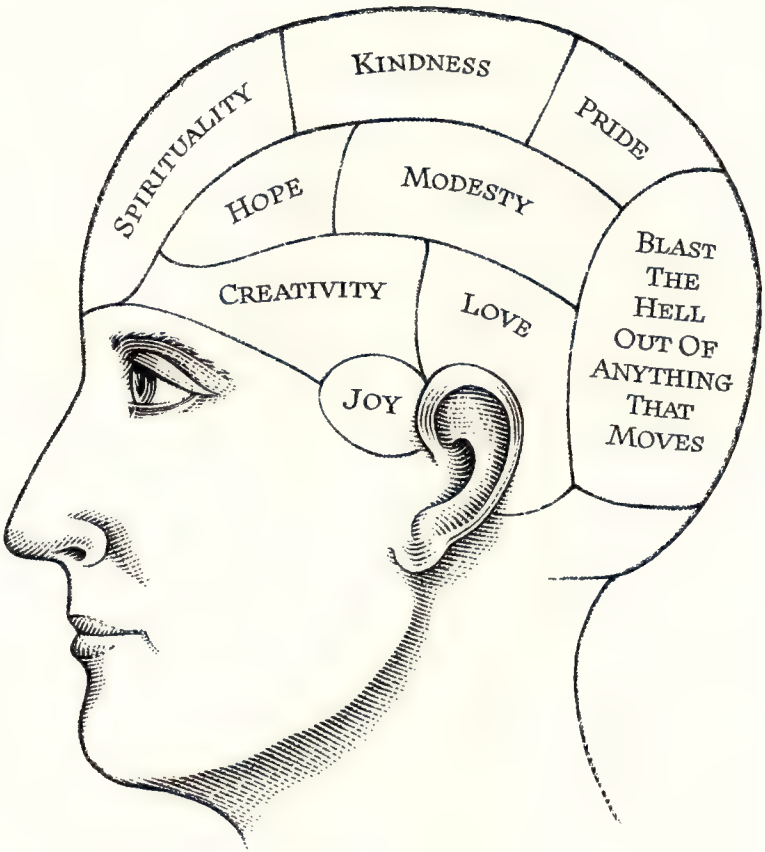
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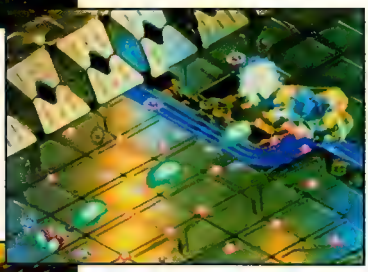
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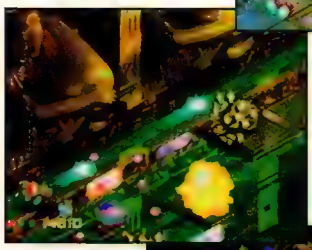
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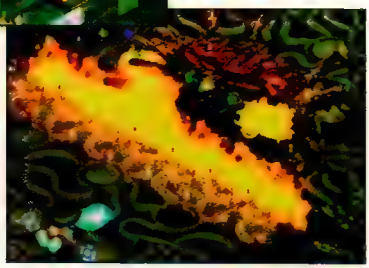


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When mediums
COLLIDE
MUSICIANS
Embrace INTERACTIVE MEDIA...
AND IT Embraces BACK



There's an inexplicable link between technology and music. From Chuck Berry strapping on an electric guitar for *Johnny B. Goode* to the computer-generated ambient-techno of The Orb, rock musicians have historically incorporated technology into their music. Whether they record on digital or analog tapes, or produce CDs or albums, popular music has always gone part and parcel with technology.

The first real boom mixing computer technology and music occurred back in the early '80s, when everyone and their brother became a New Wave band. It was obvious to everyone that electronic composition and interactive music was the wave of the future. However, the shallow depth of what could be accomplished soon made it even more obvious that the equipment had a way to go before that future arrived.

WELL, THE FUTURE IS NOW.

Pump Up The Volume

Any discussion concerning the marriage of computers and music is inexorably going to deal with video and computer game soundtracks. So let's start there

Perhaps paramount in the mix of music and games is California's Inscape, the joint venture between Home Box Office, Warner Music Group and Nash New Media. The folks at Inscape believe musical content is an important part of the game experience and have pulled in many of the field's cutting-edge people to work with.

"I think that a lot of the leading recording artists of the last decade were multimedia artists," says Inscape President Michael Nash. "These people were recording albums, directing their own music videos, inventing these elaborate stage shows, in some cases they were film actors or they wrote books. A lot of the top recording artists were already expressing their vision in a lot of different media, and so you had a technology that allowed people to put together artistic expressions of different forms into one world. I think that naturally there were a number of those people who were really ready to go and so we immediately aligned with those kind of people."

One of the groups Nash aligned himself with was rock's oddsters the Residents for the interactive game, the Residents' *Bad Day on the Midway* (Windows or Mac CD). *Midway* is a murder mystery set at a carnival, with the original soundtrack and bizarre creative input by the Residents.

But that's only one of the projects Inscape has completed working with musicians. Inscape also teamed with Devo on *Devo Presents Adventures of the Smart Patrol* (Windows or Mac CD), a satire about a band struggling against mainstream society in a future world dominated by the "Big Entertainment Company."

Obviously, the band's involvement goes beyond merely the conceptual level, but extending into the soundtrack. "It's all their music," Nash says. "It's half new music and half classic Devo. There are five rules of devolution, [and] you have to identify those five rules during the course of the gameplay. They're each linked to a classic Devo song, and the soundtrack for the game itself is all original music that was put together by Mark Mothersbaugh and Jerry Casale and recorded with the Devo guys, many of whom were working with Mark Mothersbaugh's media music company, Mutato Muzika."

In another example of musicians' involvement with CD-ROM games, Inscape's haunted house game *The Dark Eye* features sound design by none other than Thomas Dolby, who also wrote the score.

"I think that he's had an enormous impact on the sense that you have that you're in a particular environment," Nash remarks. "With a lot of games you have this theme that keeps recycling over and over in the background and if you're stuck at a certain point, it starts to throw you out of the experience.

"What Thomas has done is: As you're navigating through the environment, you're hearing footsteps, you're hearing this really well-mixed, separated audio that really makes you feel like you're located in a space where different events are going on around you. He has these great themes and they're deployed selectively so you don't get sick of them like you get sick of the music in most multimedia titles. The total effect is to really locate you in the world."


• Peer into *The Dark Eye*


• Devo's *Adventures of the Smart Patrol*



• The Residents' *Bad Day on the Midway*

Sound Check

Another person who's been playing at the crossroads of music and sound design is veteran game-theme composer Tommy Tallarico, who attributes the changes in game music to the introduction of the Sega CD. "That was the first opportunity to actually play real music. Now we have the Play-Station and Saturn, so everyone is getting an opportunity to do it."

The quality of console game music is absolutely controlled by the equipment. "When CD-ROM first came out, everyone was under the impression that they could do real music. But that wasn't necessarily the case. Because of the CD-ROM medium, programmers were able to do a lot more, so they would access the disc a lot during actual levels."

Tallarico explains the basics involved in CD-ROM music. "There are three types of music. We refer to the best as Red Book audio, music playing off the CD. But if you are, for example, playing Track 2 during a level, and the programmer needs to access the disc during that level, it interrupts the music. In certain instances, you are unable to use the disc for music. So they came up with a second way to do music, called Yellow Book audio. That's a whole song, but sampled, and the quality brought down to save space.

"Most game machines use a double-speed CD drive, so they can only bring in

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300K a second. So you have to drop the resolution of the sound a little, but you can do it without accessing the CD. The programmer can 'stream it in.' The third way is with MIDI and instruments."

Depending on the project and the type of game, musicians use different techniques. Tallarico explained that they all have advantages and disadvantages. "The advantage with Red Book is the best possible sound. The setback is that you can't be really interactive with the music. It's great for background themes. My favorite is obviously Red Book, where you just put in a theme, in games like *Earthworm Jim* and *Terminator*. I'm doing *3-D Hyper Pinball* for Virgin, with six pinball tables. What we did was write six different audio tracks. For me that's like a dream come true.

"The medium, at the Red Book level, is the best it could be. You can't get better sound. When the speeds of the drive get faster, you'll see the Yellow Book Audio, the 'streaming' of audio, get better and better, the bandwidth get higher and higher.

"If you play *Rebel Assault* on the PC," Tallarico continues, "they're streaming the Yellow Book audio, at 8-Bit 11 kHz; it's about one-eighth the quality of Red Book audio. When I did *Demolition Man* for 3DO, we were also streaming all the audio Yellow Book, but we were using 16-Bit 22.05, which is half of what Red Book audio is. The quality sounds real real good, but not perfect. As technology advances, this Yellow Book audio is going to be 16-Bit, 44.1 stereo, which is exactly what Red Book audio is."

How long will this take? Tallarico predicted: "On the PC side, I think we'll be seeing it in three years. On the consoles, we'll see it in the next wave of machines, in five years or so."

Music For The Masses

While game soundtracks continued to progress, popular music, meanwhile, simply had to wait for the technology to improve for their part to come into play. It took the advances of the '90s to make CD-ROM attractive to top-flight musicians.





• the cranberries

Even so, it was a learning game. Todd Rundgren's *No World Order* showed the promise of the medium in 1993. Another early project, the Bowie *Jump* CD-ROM was frankly disappointing, which even he will readily admit. After a few stumbles, developers learned it took more than talented artists, it also required design implementation by top computer sound veterans

Ted Cohen, producer of the cranberries' CD-ROM, discussed the birth of the field. "I worked at Warner records for 14 years, part of the time with Stan Cornyn. He put together a think tank: a couple from Warner, a couple from Atari and some others. We sat around talking about what interactive music would be, in May or June of 1982.

"We tried to figure out, if people were going to interact with music, what would they want? How close would you let the user get to the artist? Instead of virtual reality, it was virtual proximity. We felt interactivity would give people a sense of proximity that they couldn't get in the real world, to make them feel they had some kind of connection with the group."

Unfortunately for Cohen, the concept didn't sell for years to come. But eventually, the developer began working with Philips New Media, and finally, Philips started the first interactive music project—Todd Rundgren's 1993 release *No World Order*.

In fall of 1993, Cohen met with representatives from Island Records to discuss using the medium to introduce a newcoming band. Not long after, talks progressed and Cohen became involved with the now-multiplatinum cranberries.

Michael Kushner, president of Philips Multimedia Music and the executive producer on *the cranberries: doors and windows* comments, "They wanted to see how multimedia could help break an artist. Since then, the artist has in fact broken—the artist sold 7 million units of their last album, so all of a sudden, it's the other way around. The artist is being used to break a medium!"

The cranberries' CD-ROM has three new songs, plus a live version of *Dreams*,

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• Interactive Alternarockers Bush

"I imagine that when the software becomes cheaper, people will be able to do their own sort of CD-ROM or cheap video"
—Dave Parsons of Bush



• Multimedia pioneer Todd Rundgren

and a composite of *Zombie*. It opens with a street scene in Limerick, the band sitting on their couch. Behind them are doors and windows—that's the main interface. [For a review of the piece, see page 146—Ed.]

"The multimedia is both about the music and about them personally," explained Kushner, "about their experiences in their first couple of years, an intimate look at the band that the user controls. You get to know each of the members, and you get to know more about their music than you would have just from listening to their records."

While the reclusive cranberries may be unavailable for comment about the medium, members of the superstar alternative rock band, Bush—drummer Robin Goodridge and bassist Dave Parsons—are ready to discuss it at length. And the two Brits have very precise thoughts about the current multimedia technology that allowed them to put out the *Little Things* enhanced CD.

"We liked the idea of putting out the CD-ROM," says Parsons. "You hear about all this technology and it seems like no one has really done anything with it in a really exciting way, with music I mean."

That's not to say that they don't have any reservations about the current shape of CD-ROM technology.

"I think you have to understand that it is a completely different medium so it's never going to sound like a live album or a bootleg album," he says. "It's never going to sound the same as if you're standing in the room and you hear a BRRRGGGH blasting because there really is no substitute. You have to be there. The energy has to be there. That's always how it will be with live music. There is no alternative. There is no way to get around it.

"Right now, our CD-ROM would be an addition to your collection, it's extra. It shouldn't be confused with reality. It'd be really awful, in five years time, that someone would say the first gig they ever went to was on their computer."

Goodridge, with a wry British manner of perceiving the world, is even more wary than Parsons. Fearful that the future will see the end of human interaction, Goodridge remarks, "It's really just a bunch of images, isn't it? It's like simulated sex and that stuff," he pauses and smiles. "Shaggin' a computer or watching a band—you can't beat it, skin, real people."

But neither Parson nor Goodridge want to condemn the computerized future too much. After all, Bush does give online interviews, has developed a Web page and is currently talking to Apple about cutting-edge software to use in conjunction with their upcoming album. Subsequently, Parsons positively glows with excitement when talking about the possibilities of the info-highway, "I imagine that sooner or later, when the software becomes cheaper, people will be able to do their own sort of CD-ROM thing or cheap video. Maybe people will be able to make their own

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videos, put them on the Internet, and then other people can download them. Maybe that's a good thing because MTV won't play them because they haven't sold many records, but you'll be able to find it somewhere on the Net."

But before we get too ahead of ourselves, let's explain a bit about the nature of Bush's *Little Things* and *the cranberries: doors and windows*: Instead of being simply a traditional CD-ROM, it's an "enhanced CD." In short, this is a CD you can listen to on your CD player, and then pop into your CD-ROM drive to access an interactive section. Many artists have jumped on this interactive bandwagon. Todd Rundgren (who basically started music CD-ROMs) recently released his new album, *The Individualist*, through the enhanced CD format. Each song has its own visual experience. The song *Cast the First Stone*, for example, has a five-level sendup of a *Doom* game where instead of chasing demons, players chase the likeness of Rush Limbaugh and attempt to obliterate him. [See the interview with Rundgren on pg. 106—Ed.]

That's not all by far. There's been a virtual rash of enhanced CDs announced. The interactive music company nu.millennia plans to soon release CDs for Soundgarden, White Zombie, Clay Walker, Terrence Trent D'Arby and P.M. Dawn. Sony Music Entertainment just rolled out its first four CD Plus titles: Bob Dylan's *Greatest Hits Volume 3*, Mariah Carey's *Merry Christmas*, Alice in Chains' *Jar of Flies* and Toad the West Sprocket's *Dulcinea*. Sony also has titles in development from Michael Jackson, Michael Bolton and James Taylor. And artists like as Quincy Jones, Carlos Santana and Herbie Hancock have interactive music CD-ROM projects planned for the near future.

Highway One (creators of the Bush enhanced CD) are working on quite a steady variety themselves, including a Bonnie Raitt release schedule for January and a Virtual Graceland project, which allows users to explore America's favorite Fairyland Palace, planned for early '96.

This is just the beginning, states Highway One's Ken Caillat, who believes that every record will have CD-ROM material in the future. "There's always empty space on every disc. There may be room for 15-20 minutes of material. I keep beating on the record companies to put something there. It's free space, waiting there."

Wim Stocks of Digital Entertainment, who helped produce Rundgren's enhanced *The Individualist*, also has prophetic things to say about the medium. "We project within a year's time nearly every release will have some form of enhancement on it, be it full-blown multimedia or interactive liner notes or lyrics, or album graphics. The potential's unlimited." ●

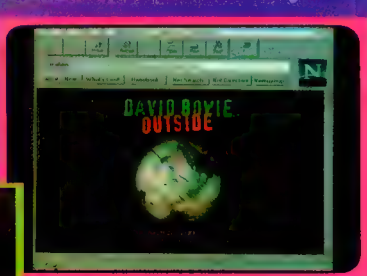
—Jay Roberts of *SPIN*

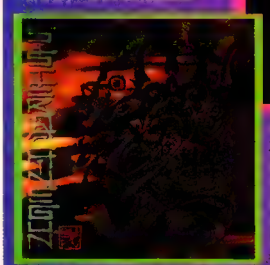
Caught In The WEB

This year, music exploded on the World Wide Web, where everyone in the business, from record companies to music clubs, is establishing Web sites in a virtual feeding frenzy. These often provide interviews, backgrounds and even sound bites. It seems almost every major record release is accompanied by a Web page.

Case in point: David Bowie explained why this was such a natural step for him. "Because so much of the *Outside* project has a visual counterpart, I felt that the Internet could be expanded to become a Web site. I hope to supplement what we're beginning with...with many more visual and audio bites that will flesh out the *Nathan Adler Diaries* even more [emphasis mine] in a really extraordinary and new way. By accessing the site (www.davidbowie.com), the user will be able to access audio clips of my *Outside* album, film clips and sounds...as the full text of the *Nathan Adler Diaries* and song clips and photos of my earliest works, photos from each performance of the tour and an explanation by me as to how the album was created. Plus, very shortly, I'll make much of my own computer [illegible] available for downloading."

But not only musical [illegible] stars are jumping onto the Web, smaller bands are finding it a good way to reach out to fans as well. Paul Schutzer, of the techno-pop band Psychosonik, plans to eventually develop the band's Web site (*http://www.[illegible]*).





[illegible] Our Web sites have been a good way for listeners to download samples of our new stuff, get up to date and now, in the near future, download the first of our new self-created 3-D Immersible Worlds, which are fully explorable game-like worlds that anyone with a Mac or PC can access."

Interactive has intriguing plans for the future of audio, tying together enhanced CDs with the Web. "Eventually, our enhanced CD singles will be able to tie right into the Web sites for those users who have a Net connection. So we'll be able to go back and explore worlds where much of the content is located on the CD, but then access new content in real time via the Web. That's where we're headed: real time, multiuser, 3-D explorable visual/musical, VR worlds."

Industrial rockers Stone Machine Cure began their own official site (*http://www.smg.org/index.html*) through interesting means. Lisa Randall, who's worked on the site and is the wife of SMC's Chris Randall, explains. "It started out that we didn't really know we had a site. Someone had e-mailed us and told us that someone was running an unofficial Stone Machine Cure Web page. We looked into that, thought it was pretty cool and contacted the guy and let him know, 'Um, hi. We're Stone Machine Cure. Ever since then we figured it be worked with us, we'd make it official."

One of the purposes the Stone Machine Cure site serves, Randall comments, is to fight the chronic misinformation that plagues the Net. "I've checked out a lot of different sites for other bands and I've a whole idea of anything unofficial I think is. I don't want to use ridiculous, but I like it doesn't count almost. A lot of people get a lot of information [illegible] and you get lots of boards, there are so many little rumors that fly around. I thought it [illegible] could create one source of official information, from us, wouldn't have all the rumors. I put up a newsletter every month and Chris goes ahead and writes some little bio or story every other month or so. Everyone's always free to comment on it any time...and they do," she laughs.

Meanwhile, SMC's lead Chris Randall [illegible] his feelings on the Web site rather eloquently. "Quicker we can [illegible] provides our fans with a means of getting information that's current, rather than a three-month-old magazine article or an eight-month-old [illegible]. Confidential. I [illegible] it was fucking cool."



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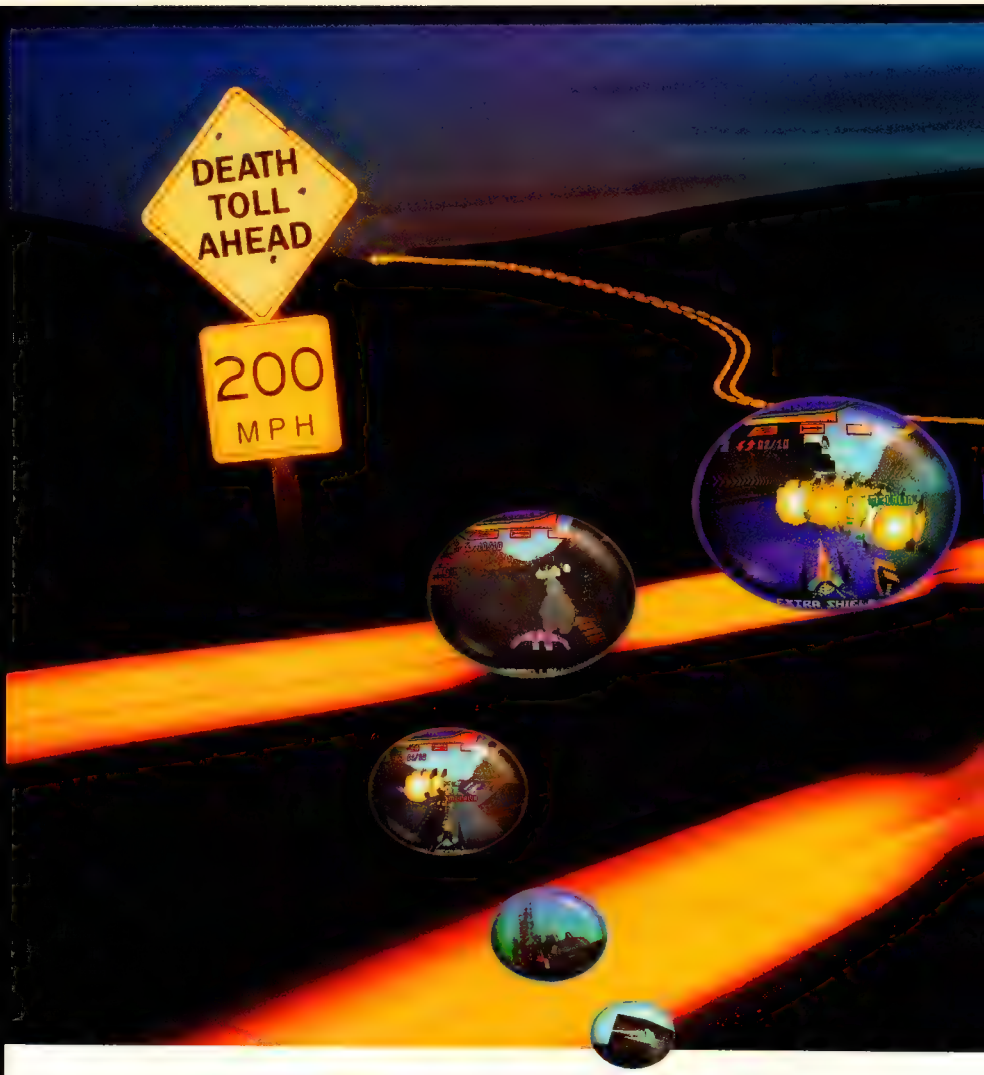
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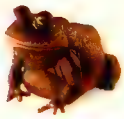
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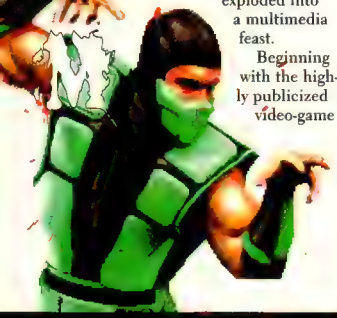
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Mortal Kombat 3 Gets the Ultimate Makeover



ortal Kombat has gone Hollywood. What started out as an obscure, gory fighting game with a cult following has exploded into a multimedia feast.

Beginning with the highly publicized video-game violence stories that made the game a household name and helped usher in the video-game ratings system, *Mortal Kombat* has gone on to spin off two sequels (and counting), a merchandising bonanza, an animated video (and potential television series) and a number-one box-office feature film.

Now it's getting its first official facelift.

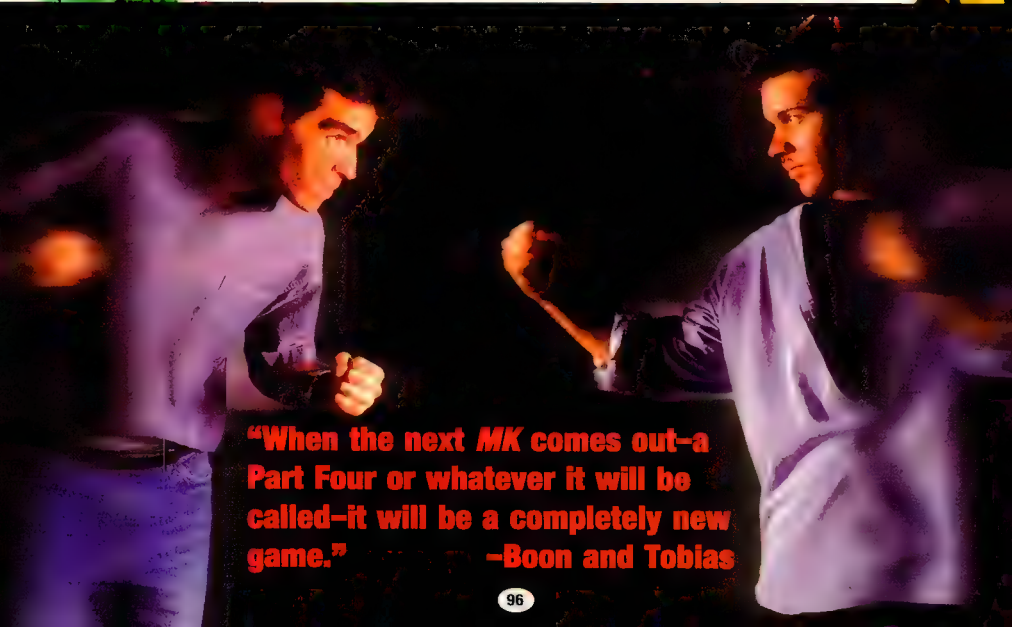
The much-anticipated update of *MK3* brings in new characters and new game options that combine for a greater challenge that is sure to get the adrenaline pumping and leave players with a lot less pocket change.

The idea behind it is to keep the arcade version of *MK3* fresh while the home version of the game hits store shelves.

New features will be added as bonus rounds, such as endurance matches and finishing move tours that will be determined by varsity symbols offered in different modes of play.

"The idea is that you can't see which one you pick and have to discover each one down the line as an incentive to finishing the game more than once," creators Ed Boon and John Tobias explain. "There are also hidden surprises at the end."

Another new feature for die-hard kombatants will be adding another hidden game (it already features the arcade classic *Galaga*), but the new blast from the past is still under wraps.



"When the next *MK* comes out–a Part Four or whatever it will be called–it will be a completely new game." –Boon and Tobias



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Hidden in the update will be several familiar faces from *Kombats* past such as Mileena, Ermac, Noob Saibot and back by popular demand, the original Sub-Zero.

More playable characters are planned, (Scorpion, Reptile, Jade and Kitana) and they will be available from the Selection Screen. Boon and Tobias also promise a new "'ality" to be revealed for all of the characters.

Modes of play have also been upgraded in the new-and-improved *MK3*. There is a two-on-two game as well as an eight-person Elimination Tournament Mode. Since there are only two controllers, however, the team modes can't be played simultaneously, even against the computer.

The look of the game has also undergone a few changes, such as four new backgrounds including a waterfront, a cavern, the desert and keeping with the theme of the game, hell.

While MK3 may have gotten the video-game equivalent of a haircut and color contacts to keep things interesting, the creators of the game are quick to point out that the upgrade is in no way meant to be a substitute for an entirely new game, and radical changes are in store for the next installment in the *MK* series.

"*UMK* was not intended to be a new game," Boon and Tobias agree. "It was just supposed to be a ROM update, not a whole separate game. When the next *MK* comes out—a Part Four or whatever it will be called—it will be a completely new game."

While the only hint that Boon and Tobias will give about *MK4* is that it will be a fighting game, they intend to use technology that no one's seen in an arcade before.

"The hardware we want isn't even defined yet," they say.

Whether it's new technology, old characters or a Battle-Royale Mode, one thing that's for certain is that *MK4*, or whatever it will be called, will continue to raise some eyebrows along with the hair on the back of your neck. ●





Why bring back the old Sub-Zero?
"It's the same reasoning as why [we brought] back Kitana or Scorpion–because everyone asks for him."
–Boon and Tobias

Mortal Kombat in the 21st Century

As the *MK* phenomenon continues to explode, here are a few ideas for future versions of the game that won't go away.

Mortal Kombat 69: Granny Acres

The Earth realm is in turmoil when its greatest warriors are forced into retirement. Jax's arms have rusted, Kano's eyebeam is weakened by bifocals and Liu Kang's back goes out whenever he tries a bicycle kick. The ageless Shang Tsung continues his quest for victory, but is defeated by a surprise fatality when Baraka's dentures fly out of his mouth and impale his Outworld Boss.

Mortal Kombat Three

Sonya is distraught when she finds out that her secret husband of many years, Kano, has finally caught up with her after she faked her own death to get away from him. Meanwhile, Sindel and Goro cook up a scheme to drive Sheeva crazy while Jax struggles to keep Shooter's afloat as Mileena leaves Stryker at the altar.

MK 5: The Johnny Cage Trial

The martial-arts champion turned actor finds himself on trial for murder as the entire Earth realm watches. While Cage claims that the fatality used was one that he is incapable of completing, stars of every *Mortal Kombat* come forth to testify, and then sell their stories for spin-off video games. Jay Leno capitalizes with his "Dancing Raidens."

Mortal Kombat 7: The Strike

When the Kombatant's current deal expires, the members of the Earth realm and the Outworld join forces to hold out for more money and a better retirement plan. Boon and Tobias threaten to replace them with scab fighters from older and less successful games. The Mortal Kombat Tournament is canceled for the year.

Mortals

Sonya, Kitana and Sindel hang out in a coffee shop with their pals Cage, Jax and Kano as they talk about relationships, their jobs and Kano's third nipple.

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INTERACTIVE FUN

FUSION's Crackerjack Staff Brings You the Skinny on the Top Five Rejected O.J. Licensed Games



FORENSIC TETRIS

In a proposed *Tetris*-type game, players would take on the role of a bumbling forensics technician trying to guide information blocks to match into DNA strands. Unfortunately, the title was riddled with bugs and would crash after an undetermined amount of time, erasing the player's record of matchups.



THE NUTTY ADVENTURE CD-ROM

Originally conceived along the lines of the *Johnny Mnemonic* CD-ROM title, *Nutty Nordberg* found players in the role of Simpson's accident-prone *Naked Gun* character. In full-motion video, players would dodge obstacles in an effort to avoid being put in traction. The title was later scrapped after the *Johnny Mnemonic* game received the lowest rating *Computer Game Review* handed out in 1995.

MECHLAWYERS

As the leader of either the defense or prosecution clans, the player guides huge and powerful robotic legal egos to fight against each other for courtroom and media supremacy. *MechLawyers* found itself put on hold due to a legal hassle. Look for it to hit store shelves sometime in '99.



OTHER O.J. PRODUCTS STOPPED AT THE GATE...

JUICETOPIA

Marketing geniuses (a.k.a. fraternity and sorority expatriots loose among the world) worked up an expansive plan to push this new fruit drink sensation. Sample flavors included the lip-smackin' "Running back Raspberry" and "Litigation Lemonade." Sadly, the product was later shelved after commercials played to test audiences induced, instead of the mind-expanding desire to buy Juicetopia, bad trips.

ALLSPORT © 1993 Rick Stewart





O.J. SAMPLES G.I. JOE FIGURE

As a special mail-in offer in conjunction with Post Cereals, consumers were to be able to order this special "Juice" G.I. Joe figure after mailing in several proofs of purchase of Shredded Wheat. After the addition of popular wrestling star Sgt. Slaughter to the G.I. Joe line in the early '80s, O.J. seemed only a natural progression. However, the idea was later scrapped after it was found the figure's boots did not actually fit his feet.

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WITH DA JUICE



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O.J. FOOTBALL LEGENDS FOR SEGA

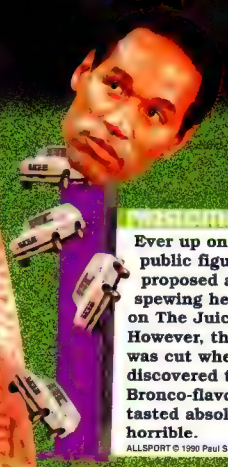
The *O.J. Football Legends* game was ultimately shot down due to general lack of public interest. "Sure he was a great player," said one game company representative, "but these days kids just don't know about him. He's simply not current enough. Nowadays, people want Sanders, people want Faulk. They've never heard of O.J. Simpson."

DRIVE, O.J., DRIVE

In this first-person racing title planned to coincide with the release of the Sony PlayStation, players navigate L.A. freeway in the notorious and freewheeling white Ford Bronco, deftly avoiding pursuers. The game later shirked off its license, went through a slight plot transformation and is now known to the gaming public as *Twisted Metal*.



"Sure he was a great player," said one game company representative, "but these days kids just don't know about him. They've never heard of O.J. Simpson."



PEZ-ING IT

Ever up on the public figures, PEZ proposed a candy-spewing head based on The Juice. However, the device was cut when it was discovered that Ford Bronco-flavored PEZ tasted absolutely horrible.

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For more rejected O.J. product information, visit one of the better addresses: *http///escape.O.J.com*

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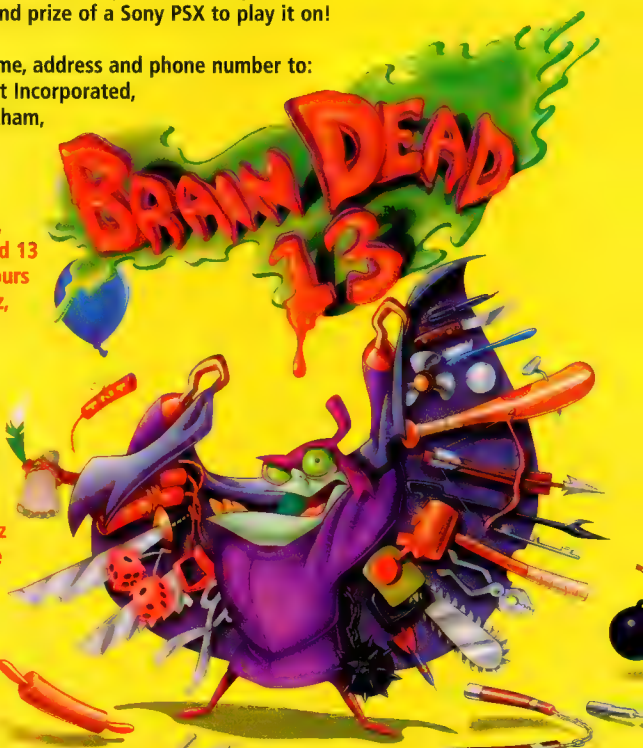
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Multimedia Godd Todd Rundgren Continues to Push the Interactive Envelope

the Individualist



Over his three-decade career, musician and multimedia pioneer Todd Rundgren has pulled in fans fanatical to the point of Deadhead proportions (though, arguably, in quieter and less visible numbers). Anyone doubting this assertion for a moment can simply access any of the scad of Rundgren fan Web sites and read among the faithful for themselves—and perhaps even cast a vote on the eternal question, "Is Todd Godd or not?"

Undoubtedly, Rundgren has given listeners plenty of material to pour over—having recorded over 20 albums and produced *at least* that number. In 1993, however, he began providing followers something to *interact* with as well. Beginning the medium as we know it, Rundgren released *No World Order*, the first interactive music CD-ROM.

Not surprisingly, Rundgren has only continued his multimedia efforts, having recently crafted a new album, the enhanced CD *The Individualist*. In an eloquent and knowledgeable interview, Rundgren spoke with *FUSION* Senior Editor Joe Fielder about this new project and interactive entertainment in general.

What do you think fans can gain from this medium that they couldn't before?

One thing that they can get is something on their computer that sounds as good as what usually comes out of their stereo. In other words, when they launch into one of these experiences (aside from graphics and little interactive activities), if they've got their stereo plugged into the computer, they'll be playing the Redbook Audio. So it won't be that nasty sounding 8-Bit digitized sound, it'll be full spectrum stereo sound.

What do you think of the current explosion of enhanced CDs?

Well, it's an explosion just from the stand-

point that everyone's announced that they're *making* one. It's not an explosion from the standpoint of everyone rushing out and buying them yet. Until that happens, we're just talking about something that's more or less speculative.

It could go a couple of directions and not everybody is going to go in the same direction. A lot of bands will just gather together some biographical material and have somebody put it into a little navigational framework, essentially giving you promotional material in the extra space. And sometimes you'll actually be charged for it! (laughter)

I think that less commonly, but more importantly, some artists will attempt to add a new dimension to what they're doing musically, rather than simply use the space for publicity purposes.

But there's no way to say with certitude what kind of response the audience is going to give this. So we're not charging any extra for what's on the disc at this particular point in time. It goes for the same price as the regular CD. That way, it at least won't be a hindrance to people getting the experience: If they're inclined to buy the record, they get the rest of it anyway. Then maybe we can drum up a little enthusiasm for the concept in general.

What most appeals to you about interactive media?

Well, we lost something when we lost the LP, and it was principally the album jacket. Artists used to expand the experience by taking advantage of the extra packaging. Now we're into a form factor that doesn't allow that for most albums. It sort of limits the kind of avenues [you pursue] from a graphical standpoint, which can be made up for by utilizing that extra area on the disc for some way to alter the experience of the music.

I would say in some limited sense we're offering an interactive



music experience because we have a little interactive lyric deal in there. You can essentially call up the lyrics of the songs, have them highlighted and follow along or else you can click on the lyrics and it'll jump to that part of the music. So that allows you in some ways to deconstruct the songs along lyric lines.

But most of the experiences are essentially little....I don't know, we'll have to think up a name for them because they're not videos. They're little presentations that have a lot of action and motion in them so they seem to be videos, but they're actually very clever manipulations of small amounts of data. So we'll just call them "vignettes." There are vignettes for every song.

What would you like to see done with the medium that hasn't been possible so far?

Since no one has yet experienced *The Individualist*, I would have to say that that is our manifesto at this point. If you want to know what we *think* should be done, *that's* what we did. In my opinion, it goes beyond what most people are even considering when the term CD-Plus comes up—in terms of the investment *and* artistic and engineering energy that went into it. We developed new technologies from the ground up to enable us to get the most out of the least. I'm sure there will be further breakthroughs, but so far people are using fairly conventional technologies to do these CD-Plus things.

What do you think about the future of interactive media?

Everything's sort of merging. In the short term, CD-ROMs are going to find more and more usage as an archival support medium, but not as a principal medium. For example, people are going to start playing games over the network, using what's on the CD-ROM as support material so you don't have to download the graphics. You can have all this kind of very thick data locally, send control information over the network and then play multiuser games that way. A lot of services will be delivered that way.

Eventually broadcasters will start banging into each other. The Internet just may become too saturated and somebody will have to come up with media-oriented networks that are based on entirely other technologies, technologies that may incorporate things like more traditional broadcasting techniques, satellite techniques and things like that, rather than fiber-optic hardware techniques.

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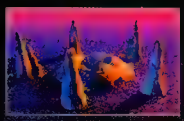
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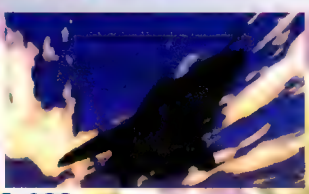
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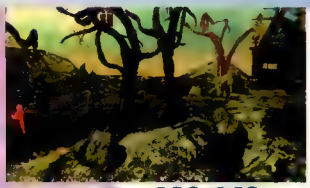
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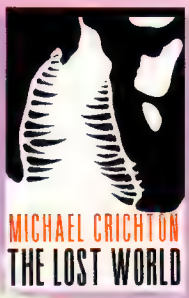
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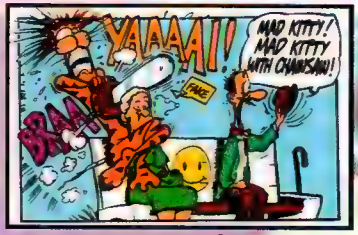
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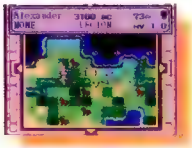
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ABSOLUTELY MARVELOUS

A Sneak Peek At Capcom-Created Marvel Mayhem

In a follow-up of sorts to Capcom's *X-Men* fighting game last year, the recent *Marvel Superheroes* arcade game takes some of your all-time favorite Marvel characters (Captain America, Spider-Man, Iron Man and the Hulk) and matches them up with X-Men, Psylocke and Wolverine, against a horde of supervillains.

Heading the evil cast as the final boss is the mad god Thanos, who appears to have set out on his quest for the powerful Infinity Gems once again. Other familiar baddies include X-Men villain Magneto; Ghost Rider's nemesis, Blackheart; Dr Strange's foe, Shuma-Gorath; Professor X's stepbrother, the Juggernaut and the ever-lovable sub-boss Doctor Doom.

Marvel Superheroes seems to be a sequel or a strong parallel to the 1992 Marvel Comic, *The Infinity Gauntlet*, wherein Thanos joined the six gems (Time, Space, Reality, Soul, Power, Mind) to become.. God. Only the combined might of the strongest Marvel Superheroes and Thanos' own inherit flaws allowed good to win out.

Marvel Superheroes
Capcom

In the game, the gems work at times to provide special abilities to the characters. Having Spider-Man use the Power Gem allows the player to execute the Maximum Spider move, where Spidey jumps about, knocking his opponent around the screen like a crazy rubber ball.

The premise is comic-book nirvana to fans, and if the gameplay is as strong as Capcom's similar *X-Men* title, it should win over gamers as well.



BOOT TO THE HEAD, AGAIN







Battle Arena Toshinden 2
PlayStation



Not only was *Battle Arena Toshinden* one of the first titles available at the launch of the PlayStation, but the title also made up much of the hype behind Sony's heavy market push. By blitzing MTV and similar networks with *Toshinden*-related PSX commercials, Sony has managed to make Sofia at least as well-known a celebrity as Aerosmith-video-cum-film star Alicia Silverstone.

Battle Arena Toshinden thrilled gamers with its amazing 3-D environment and ultra-dramatic special moves. In March, a sequel to this game promises to hit homes, packed full of new goodies to entice fighting fans.

Right off the start, the cast has been knocked up to a total of 10 warriors, as well as a probable few hidden characters. Gaia, the boss from the first game, has shed his menacing armor to act as a playable fighter. Three other fighters (Tracy, Chaos and another) expect to add new features to the game through never-before-seen attacks—and the original characters have returned with new powers. At press time, however, the sub-boss and boss are undetermined.

Sources report that *Battle Arena Toshinden 2* will feature not only improved gameplay and enhanced, more realistic graphics, but also new lighting effects that ensure the title will be more cinematic than before.

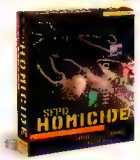
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REMEMBER WHEN THEY Used WHEELS?

Sony's *Wipeout* Puts a New Spin on Racing

If aliens kidnapped me and told me that (along with Andy Kaufman and the Loch Ness Monster) I would be ruler of the universe, I couldn't be more stunned and excited than I am over *Wipeout* from Sony/Psygnosis for the Sony PlayStation.

Before I go any further, I should explain that I'm in the minority of video-game players: 1) I don't understand the appeal of *Mortal Kombat*; 2) I only own one game system (a dusty Sega Genesis) and 3) I don't know any fatalities. Having said this, I'd like to throw down the gauntlet to all the MKer's out there by challenging them to a few laps in *Wipeout*.

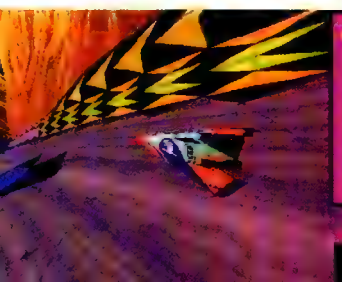
No combos will save your butt here. No secret moves. No ripping off of heads. This futuristic racing game speeds you along by the seat of your pants at break-neck speed until your head swims and you can start to taste the colors [Track four tastes like summer.—Ed.], taking curves and switchbacks that I wouldn't even dream of trying in my Honda hatchback with split-rear, fold-down seats. What I'm trying to say here is that it's the most fun I've ever had without a condom and/or several cherry bombs.

As soon as you start the disc spinning, players are treated to a spectacular movie displaying the sleek hovercrafts that you'll soon be piloting along six gut-wrenching tracks. Once you're past that little piece of eye candy, you get to choose your control layout and music preferences. If you like techno-synth music, then you'll probably be pretty impressed by the selection of original tracks that are supplied with this game. If not, then you'll probably want to turn the sound down and put on some Starland Vocal Band. Now choose your ship, select from Championship Race, Single Race or Time Trial (where you can run any of the tracks without competing ships to get in the way) and you're off!

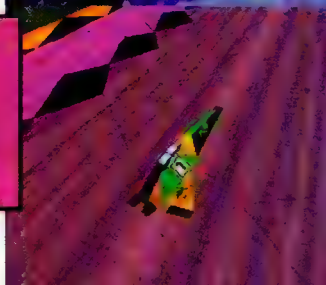
Track one is a relatively easy beginning, allowing you to get comfortable with the controls; the curves are pretty user-friendly although the tunnel before the finish line will make you doubt your manhood (especially if you're a woman). Track Two lures you in like a free piece of candy until you discover it's Clove gum and you hit the S-curves near the end. By Track Three you'll be completely emasculated with a zig-zagging tunnel and shriveling jumps over gaping ravines. It gets kinda hairy after that.

In short, bring your Depends undergarments and leave your fatalities at home. *Wipeout* is the game that pushed me over the edge into rabid gaming-fan land. I guess I'll have to buy a PlayStation now.

--Pat Sandberg









AFROS ARE COOL!

NBA *Live* '96 is the latest, greatest, but also probably the last basketball simulation to come from the boys at *EA Sports* on the 16-Bit front. This game is so good that EA's biggest problem will be meeting and beating the lofty standards this game sets in 16-Bit consoles. Although the engine is similar to last year's, NBA *Live* '96 includes enough cool new options to make it stand apart from and above NBA *Live* '95.

The biggest and best improvement is creating players. EA Sports has always done a killer job capturing the nuances that make the sport fun and NBA *Live* '96 takes this to a new level in the Create Player Mode. In the past, you could only play using and trading players from one season. While that was cool and allowed players to ask, "What if...", it didn't include players from different eras. But what if Larry Bird came back in his prime? Or Michael Jordan? (Whoops, he did.) Or "Pistol" Pete Maravich? How tough would the Pistons be if Grant Hill had been in the starting lineup with Lambeer, Rodman, Thomas and Dumars?

NBA *Live* '96 allows this through an ingenious programming coup in the Create Player Mode. By simply punching in the name of a former Hall of Famer, you will be rewarded by seeing that player's full list of attributes accurately depicted on screen, from jersey number, to college, to height, to hairstyle. Yes, hairstyle. If Dr. J is going to return when he was in his prime, that also includes the huge 'fro he sported during his ABA days. Or if you think Bob Cousy would have looked hipper in a 'fro and a full-face beard.

By the way, while mixing and matching players from different eras is a blast, the game is also extremely fun to play and has all the features of a real NBA game. Gameplay is smooth, solid and fast. EA is going to have a tough act to follow to match these attributes, and I have yet to see a CD-based game with such a solid feel. *-Joe Funk*



TECH SPECS

- **PUBLISHER:** Electronic Arts
- **SYSTEM:** Sega Genesis
- **THEME:** Basketball Sim.
- **MEGS:** N/A
- **PLAYERS:** Up to 4 with an adaptor

5



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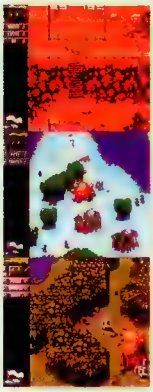
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FODDER FOR THOUGHT

Cannon Fodder is one of those delightful, guilty pleasures of gaming. It's not likely to challenge *Command & Conquer*, *Shockwave* or even *Desert Strike* in the eye-candy department. The idea is certainly no groundbreaker, either, with players commanding a squad of troops over a collection on terrain types, blasting away at enemy soldiers and blowing up their installations. But then, sometimes the most entertaining games are the least prepossessing at first glance, and *Cannon Fodder*, developed originally by Britain's Sensible Software morphs into a compelling, even addictive contest that goes straight for the soft, white throat of hardcore play value and never gives an inch toward bells or whistles.



The game offers an angled, topdown perspective of a series of scrolling landscapes—everything from standard countryside, to snow and ice-covered topography. There are jungles, deserts, arctic wastes, moors and even a cool underground base. The interface combines a combination of point-and-click directional commands, semismart icons, weapon targeting and the use of a "troop leader" Gamers indicate where they want their troops to go by clicking on that location This, in turn, draws the immediate attention of the troop leader, whose squad will follow him directly into the jaws of death—or even over slippery, frozen lakes! The player's soldiers clamber over mountains, swim across rivers, moving either in stealth (i.e., hiding behind rocks and creeping up on the enemy) or in straight-ahead search-and-destroy modes.

Soldiers who survive move up in rank, offering gamers more strategic options. The arsenal includes rifles, grenades, bazookas and even five vehicle types. Once *Cannon Fodder* pumps past the first few milkrun-type missions, it becomes one of those delights with just enough strategic overlay to keep things interesting. —*Bill Kunkel*

TECH SPECS

■ **PUBLISHER:** Virgin ■ **SYSTEM:** 3DO ■ **THEME:** Action-Strategy ■ **MEGS:** N/A ■ **PLAYERS:** 1 ■ **LEVELS:** 24 Missions

BRAIN'S ADDICTION

Are you addicted to *Tetris*? Can't get enough of it? Well, here's a new fix for you. It's called *Zoop*. Now you can forget about everything else in your life.

Zoop is a puzzle game that finds the player as a colored triangle situated smack-dab in the middle of the game screen. Your triangle must fire its way through oncoming rows of fast-moving shapes that approach from every side, keeping them from getting to the center.

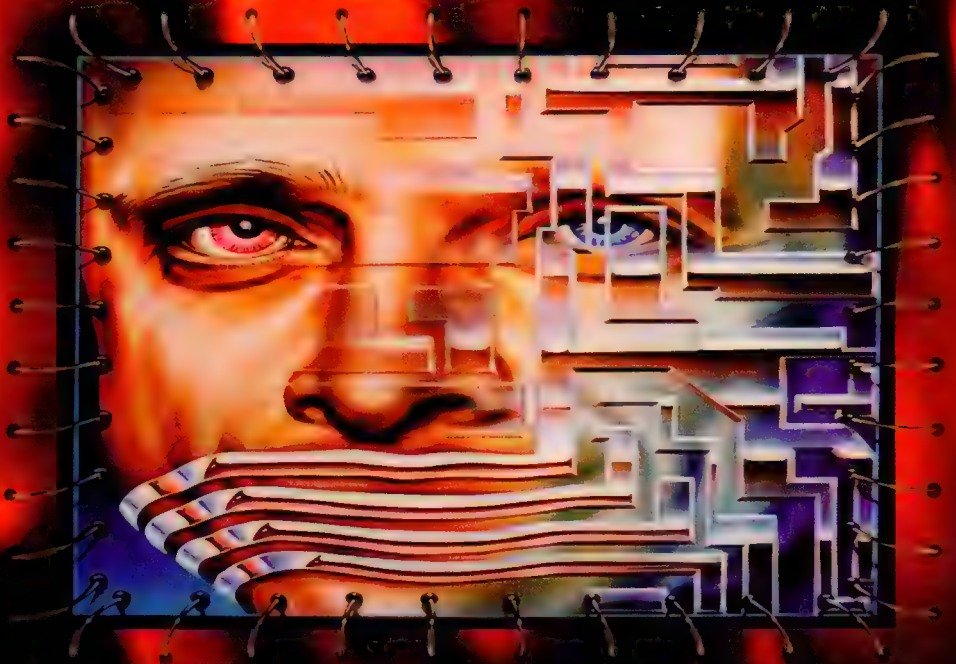
Ten geometrically patterned backgrounds add to the difficulty of the game. As you advance each level of game play, the designs become more intricate, making it harder to spot the colored figures. If you're looking for a relaxing pastime, forget it. *Zoop* is faster and even more nerve-wracking than *Tetris*, and knowing that there's a ceiling of 99 levels makes you just want to reach the end all the more.

Zoop's not only a safe, nonviolent game for Mom 'n' Dad to pass on to the wee ones, but also probably the best puzzle game of '95. —*Roy Bassave*



HARLAN ELLISON

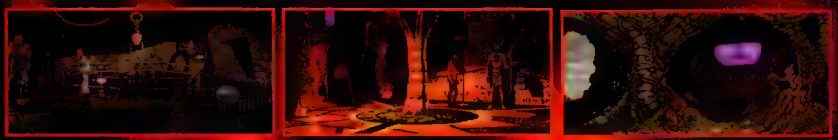
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PARADISE FOUND

Solid adventures of the *King's Quest* school are rare flowers indeed in the console jungle, so fans of this genre should be very pleased with *Lost Eden*, the latest offering from Cryo, veteran designers whose past work for Virgin includes the original *Dune*.

It seems that every product off the shelves these days boasts a stunning visual opening sequence, but even the most jaded interactive movie buffs should be impressed with *Lost Eden's* magnificent introduction, complete with dinosaurs, elegant, sweeping pans and fluid animations.

The game's delightfully intuitive interface makes excellent use of smart cursors, using large icons to indicate everything from possible movement to human interactions. Players can scan the cursor over an area, but it will only convert to an active command symbol when it is positioned over a viable area. The interface is somewhat similar to that used in *The 7th Guest*, but the icons are much larger and a greater portion of the on-screen elements are interactive.

The science-fantasy world of *Lost Eden* posits the simultaneous coexistence of humans and dinosaurs, always a crowd-pleaser. The chief heel is Moorkus Rex, a creature who truly exposes Barney's dark side. This toothy carnivore commands an army of bad-ass Tyrannosaurs and his ultimate plan involves the utter elimination of both the humans and dinosaurs, leaving only himself and a bunch of surly lizards to rule the roost. Okay, so they won't have anything to eat but one another, and once you've killed everybody, who does the work? So, granted, it's not much of a plan, but when your brain is the size of a chickpea, long-range strategy is probably not your specialty.

A special pleasure: Every character and object in *Lost Eden* has text tags. If you click on an object, a voice will describe it; click on another person, and they will speak to you in a distinctive voice.

Lost Eden is a delicate, delightful adventure that makes for a marvelously unique diversion from the scads of fighting games and racecar simulations. In short: Get Lost as soon as possible.

—*Bill Kunkel*







TECH SPECS

- **PUBLISHER:** Virgin
- **SYSTEM:** 3DO
- **THEME:** Adventure
- **LEVELS:** N/A
- **PLAYERS:** 1



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EVERYBODY WAS KUNG FU FIGHTING

Virtua Fighter, the mega arcade hit and Sega Saturn flagship title, has brought new life to the Sega's 32X system—and none too soon at that.



For those few of you unaware of the title, *Virtua Fighter* is a fighting game like *Mortal Kombat* or *Street Fighter*, but that possesses a much more realistic martial-arts bent, as well as a near 360 degree view of battle. Players face off against the computer or a friend, picking from eight fighters who possess more than 700 moves.



What makes the 32X version of *Virtua Fighter* stand out from the rest is the added features included within. For example, in Tournament Mode, players can set up to eight players into elimination bouts ending in a single champion. Also, there are five different angles from which to view the battle (plus an additional hidden two). Best of all, players can change these views while in mid-fight. An option is even included where players can change the appearance of their fighters' outfits. These added features quickly add up to make this the most enjoyable version of an already entertaining title.

Roy Bassave





YOU JUST CAN'T BEAT RACING WITH GUNS

Forget *Daytona* or *Ridge Racer*, *Cyber Speedway* blows them both away. *Cyber Speedway* features fuel-injected futuristic, hovercraft combat *and* racing in 3-D-rendered worlds.

In a story line similar to the classic cheesey '70s film *Rollerball*, the powers of the world have taken to settle their disputes in a sled-racing competition to determine which empire will expand its sphere of influence. Players choose from five super-powered hovercrafts to race/attack with. And from there, the fate of your empire is in your greasy little racing gloved mitts.

Oddly complementing the game is the rock/rockabilly/funk soundtrack by the Californian band, Bygone Dogs. As an added bonus, the game disc contains several audio tracks of the band's music that can be listened to off a conventional CD player. Also worthy of note is that *Cyber Speedway* supports one- or two-player racing and is compatible with Sega's Arcade Racer steering wheel peripheral.





It's a simple enough premise: driving around, dodging obstacles and shooting your opponents in an ammunition-laden game of tag—but somehow it's compelling in its simplicity. For everyone crying for *Combat* to be updated for 1995, *Cyber Speedway* provides, delivering simple, destructive fun for the masses.

—Roy Bassave





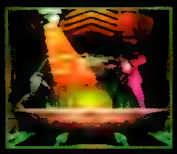
Deformed. Evil. Vindictive.

Twisted. Maniacal. Crazed.



Got something against it

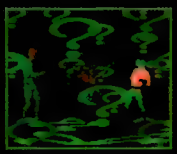
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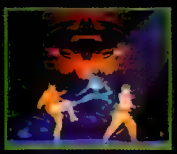
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AN ARM... AND A LEG

When I heard that Rayman is a little fellow drawn without either arms or legs (although he has two each of feet and fists) I suspected the programmers had come up with a novel way to have less on screen to animate to achieve more speed. But, no, there were no shortcuts taken in this game that brings classic platform-jumping action to the PlayStation in a challenging and colorful manner.

Rayman lives in the palette-ch world of the Electoons. But ood old Mr. Dark (and I'd hate to say what I thought his name was until I saw it in print) has stolen the Protoon crystal that keeps all the cute and big-eyed, little Electoons happily together. Now *Rayman* has to go from world to world finding them, releasing them and sending them home. So, okay, no Pulitzer Prizes awarded to Ubi Soft here for originality or depth in scenario design. On the other hand, the play's the thing that makes a game a failure or a king. And *Rayman* does have some kingly play value.

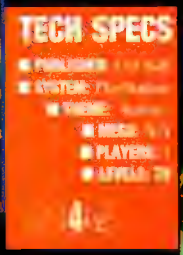
To begin with, the artwork itself is just gorgeous. This is the kind of color and animation that will have many PlayStation owners using this to demo their systems to people who like platform games. No one who does like them will be able to resist, as Rayman jumps after the blue globes (the "t'ings") that grant lives and often lead the way to secret spots.

Each level is a real challenge. Not easy but not too hard, each world has its own interior logic to solve. And, as each world is solved, Rayman gains more powers (such as throwing his fists across the screen) that can be used by re-entering previous worlds to save more Electoons that could not be reached before. Still, some players will find that *Rayman* may be a trifle too hard and could be frustrated especially by the Bosses. On the other hand, once a boss is defeated, he's gone the next time that level is entered.

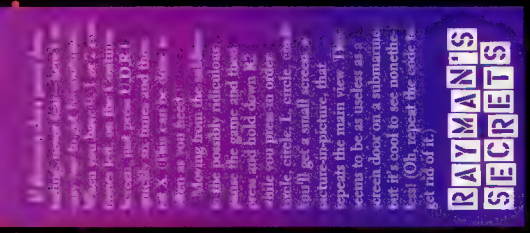
Overall, *Rayman* would make a great game for any Sony PlayStation owner looking to (sorry about this) stay out of arm's way.

—*Neal Shapiro*





RAYMAN'S SECRETS







'LA BLUE GIRL' Centuries ago, a ninja clan made a deal with the forces of the underworld 600 years later, Miko Mido, a beautiful ninja in training, must make sure that the sex-starved Shikma stay out of humanity's way. Then Miko defends herself again against forces of evil. **CD $24**



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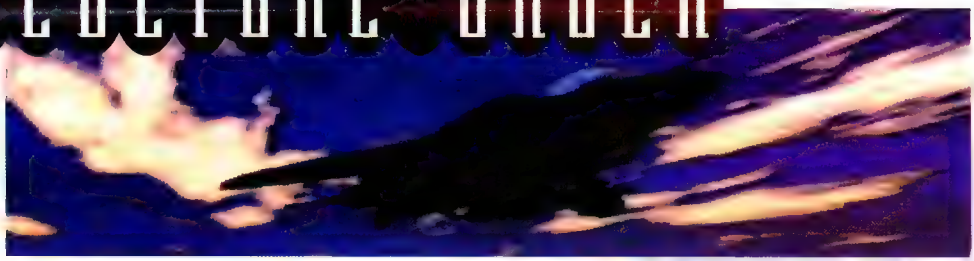
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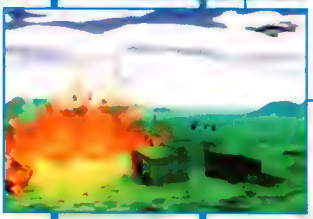
THERE'S A MAN ON THE WING OF THIS FLIGHT SIM

First off, calling an air combat sim *Flying Nightmares* is a lot like naming a brand of jam "Smuckers," 'cause, baby, with a name like that, it better be good. Unfortunately, while Domark's latest contribution to the console flight sim craze is hardly a horror from the hellish pits along the lines of, say, *Blackfire* (Sega/Saturn), it still has too many gremlins to qualify as a top gun.

The game's primary problem is its control. Frankly, anyone attempting to play this game on a standard 3DO controller is apt to wind up wearing a flak jacket that snaps in the back, pounding his or her helmeted head against virtual padded walls. There are so many different control inputs that the publishers were forced to include a card detailing the 20-plus different flight mode combinations. And as anyone who has ever engaged in air combat—real world or simulation—can attest, by the time you've finished looking up commands such as "Left Shift + Right Shift + Play + Stop = Eject!", the need to actually depart your cockpit has usually been reduced to a moot point, since they are probably scraping you off the side of a mountain.









TECH SPECS:

- PUBLISHER:
- SYSTEM: 3DO
- THEME:
- MEGS: CD
- PLAYERS:
- LEVELS:

Domark, of course, has a solution—pick up the CH Flightstick Pro for the 3DO. These days, Pros can be obtained for approximately $70-80, which is a nice chunk of change, and in all likelihood a good bit more than the user paid for the game itself. But even this leviathan of control technology fails to answer *Flying Nightmares*' most profound weaknesses, including pedestrian graphics, the near-



impossibility of landing (sans autopilot) and even a lame take-off sequence. Moreover, since the plane being flown is a Harrier, the famed "jump jet," actual VTOL involves a long, long journey down the game's learning curve (initial take-offs occur on a battleship's runway).

One thing is for sure: Generic flight simulations are not going to convince any real sim fan to abandon their PCs and Spectrum HoloByte software in favor of flawed 3DO attempts at the genre like *VR Stalker* (American Laser Games) and *Flying Nightmares*.

—*Z. Burroughs*

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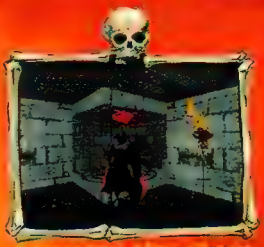
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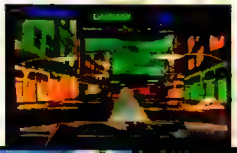
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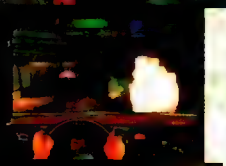
IBM CD-ROM

CULTURE SHOCK

DEATH RACE 1995

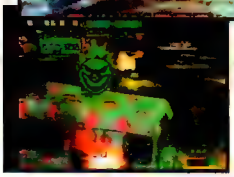












Once in a great while a game comes along that just totally rocks. *Twisted Metal* is such a game—you simply want to play it over and over until your fingers bleed and your eyes fall free from their sockets.

The basic premise is a competition a la *Mortal Kombat* (complete with colorful and wicked characters with mysterious pasts), but applied to a demolition derby of sorts. There are 10 different vehicles that can do battle, ranging from a standard *Road Warrior* car to a demonic ice cream truck, each differing in terms of armor, handling, speed and "special weapons."

The battles take place in many strange locales, from a highway to the rooftops of skyscrapers. My personal favorite arena is Cyberbia: a giant suburban neighborhood complete with innocent bystanders. There are all sorts of pick-ups to help you in your quest for total carnage. Rockets, mines, oil slicks and other dastardly weapons are hidden throughout.

What makes *Twisted Metal* so entirely cool is the gameplay: It's sort of like *Super Mario Kart* on LSD. The 3-D texture-mapped graphics are beautiful and detailed, and it is possible to blow holes through most things you see. The enemies are intelligent, and each one often has a certain strategy that he uses against you. It's very rare to see a game where the computer can hurt itself. Here, if you find a safe spot, you can wait for the other contestants to fight among themselves.







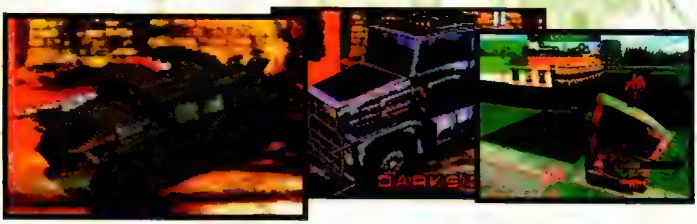


TECH SPECS:

- **PUBLISHER:** Sony
- **SYSTEM:** PlayStation
- **MEGS:** N/A
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2
- **LEVELS:** 7

Twisted Metal has it all, attitude, graphics and intense gameplay. If you're up for some warped humor and nonstop action, this is the game to get.

—Andrew Baran

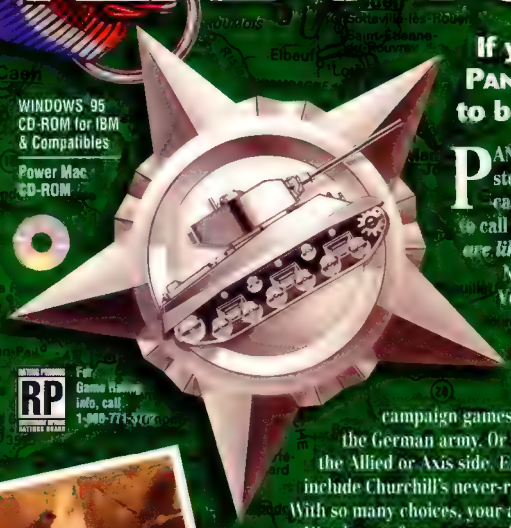


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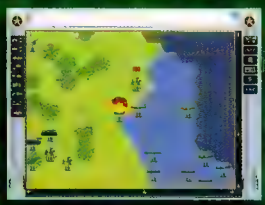
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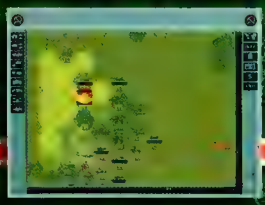
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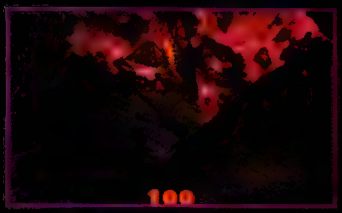
A Sneak Preview of id Software's Earth-Shaking New Title

It's estimated that nearly of 75 percent of all computers have *Doom* installed on them. After an all-inclusive hit like that and only one among many, id Software can well afford to announce officially that the release date of their next big title, *Quake*, will be "when it's finished." Christmas may count as the wish list prediction date, but with the company's strong belief in making the product as strong as possible, PC gamers may want to prepare a list of alternate stocking stuffers.

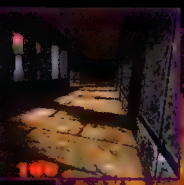
At press time, the game story line was still undecided. "The story is the last thing we do," laughs id's Wilbur. While the game's title is supposed to refer to a character who is the biggest and baddest bad-ass in his world, the name has nothing to do with the story line at this time.

From looking at preliminary *Quake* game screens, it's easy to tell the basic style of the game will be much the same as the first-person POV used in the *Doom* and *Wolfenstein 3D* titles. However, the new engine promises to be as much as a leap from *Doom* and *Doom II* as the gulf between those titles were from *Wolfenstein 3D* and *Spear of Destiny*.

Significant changes can be seen right off. The engine has progressed to the extent where castle walls can be 3-D rendered, as opposed to the rather flat architecture of *Wolfenstein* and *Doom*. Not only is the appearance of the game three-dimensional, reports explain, but the gamer's interaction with the environment as well. In *Quake*, players will be able to not only aim up and down, but jump up as well. These effects, coupled with more graphically realistic character interaction and sensational lighting effects, promise to make *Quake* the most realistic 3-D game ever created.

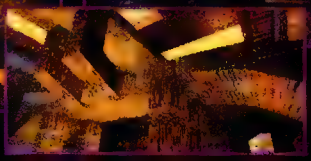




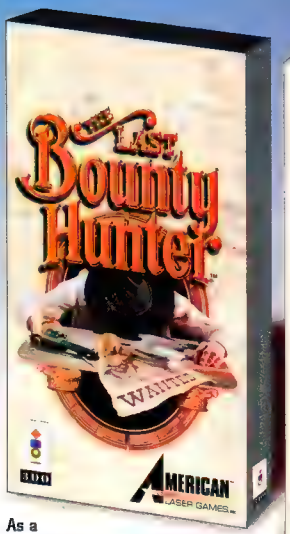








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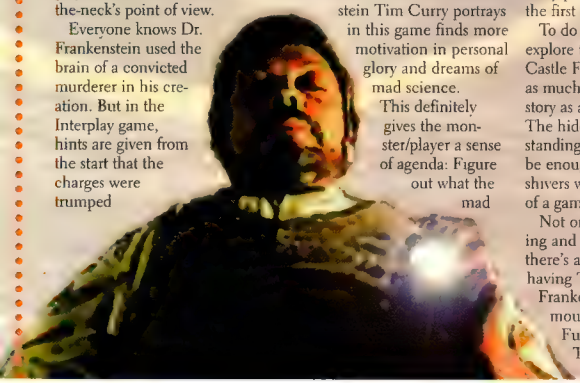
Frankenstein rates as one of the perennial stories in the English language. Almost as many *Frankenstein* films exist as Westerns. An entire genre could probably be created just of old Frank.

Giving a good nod to the timeless popularity of the story, Interplay offers us *Frankenstein: Through the Eyes of the Monster*, a video-filled interactive adventure combining equal parts *Myst* and Gothic horror story. In this title, the player gets to play the first-person perspective part of Frankenstein's Monster. However, some unique twists have been added to make the story more sympathetic and playable from old bolt-in-the-neck's point of view.

Everyone knows Dr. Frankenstein used the brain of a convicted murderer in his creation. But in the Interplay game, hints are given from the start that the charges were trumped up, and the owner of the brain in question actually went down due to a frame job.



Secondly, Mary Shelley's Victor Von Frankenstein found motivation from the urge to conquer death for the good of mankind. But the Dr. Frankenstein Tim Curry portrays in this game finds more motivation in personal glory and dreams of mad science. This definitely gives the monster/player a sense of agenda: Figure out what the mad doctor is up to and what happened to get you into this nasty predicament in the first place.



To do this, the player must explore the brilliantly rendered Castle Frankenstein, which is as much a character in this story as any of the main players. The hidden passages and outstanding art of the Castle would be enough to bring small spine shivers without the intervention of a game at all.

Not only is the game engaging and beautifully illustrated, there's a good sense of irony in having Tim Curry playing Dr. Frankenstein after his infamous role as Dr. Frank N. Furter, a.k.a. "The Sweet Transvestite From Transylvania," in the horror movie spoof, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*. However, getting this game to run on anything less than a Power Mac is a pretty tough trick. While it claims to run on an LCIII or above with system 7.0 or greater, we had real problems getting the game to run on an LCIII and only achieved marginal performance from a Quadra with well over the minimum specs.



TECH SPECS



While something of a monster to run, *Frankenstein: Through the Eyes of the Monster* might be just the thing to reanimate the life of Mac gamers who love this timeless tale of mad science.

—*John P. Withers*

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Outside Looking In

The problem with being state of the art is there's no future in it. When *Voyeur* was released on the CD-i just a few years ago, it was generally regarded as pretty hot stuff The clever design by Dave Riordan did a masterful job of making lemonade out of lemons. The game player was trapped in a fixed location, so Riordan made him a private eye engaged in the video stake-out of an embassy-style compound filled with sleazoid political types. The game's video-camera technology is positively supernatural; setting the camera's sights on a room allows the user to snoop inside drawers and move objects in the area.



The game idea is simplicity itself: Gather enough evidence with the cam to indict the guilty parties and call the police. Philips spared no expense on the original development, using its own POV Studios, A-list interactive cinema director Robert Weaver and, for the first time in an electronic game, an actual "star," washed-up TV ham Robert Culp, who looks embalmed in most scenes.

Two and a half years later, however, the CD-i is a doorstop, and *Voyeur* has been ported over to Mac PC CD format in hopes that the audience will assume this is a production on the level of, say, *Under A Killing Moon*. Instead, the once-impressive greenscreen FMV now looks like everybody else's FMV.

On the upside, the production does show Weaver's considerable skill with a camera to good effect, while Riordan remains a skillful enough designer to keep players intrigued for a few play sessions.

—Bill Kunkel



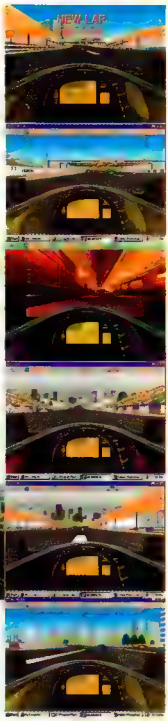
TECH SPECS
- **PUBLISHER:**
- **SYSTEM:**
- **THEME:**
- **MEGS:** 2
- **PLAYERS:**
- **LEVELS:** N/A

LIFE IN THE FAST LANE



Gentlemen start your Windows! *Al Unser Jr. Arcade Racing* from Mindscape is here and ready to roll under Win95. Windows! Don't look so confused. Unless you've been on the O.J. jury or in a coma the last few months, you're already aware that Windows 95 really is a cool gaming platform.

Even though *Al Unser* isn't the *serious*, endless detail-filled racing game that *Indy* or *NASCAR Racing* are, it delivers a solid driving experience similar to the arcade racing granddaddy, *Pole Position* or the Genesis' *Super Monaco GP*. Although similar to these titles in gameplay, *Unser* stays in the race graphically. There are 15 courses to choose from and all feature top-notch, texture-mapped backgrounds, tunnels and grandstands, mixed in with various polygon-based objects like bridges and banners that scale over and around you as you race.



Players are provided with three modes of racing to choose from. In Timed, players race to hit checkpoints and get more racing time a la *Pole Position* In Practice, players select any car and track they want. There are no opposing racers and no time limit, so it's you and the open road. And in Championship, it's you against 10 other Indy car drivers going for the checkered flag across 15 tracks.



The simplicity in *Unser* is both a blessing and a curse. You get great graphics and an easy-to-learn game that moves quickly on the screen but there are little things missing that would give the game more depth and replay value, such as damage, explosions and even power-ups.

In all, *Unser* is a pretty fun game that is cool when you have 10 minutes at a time to play something, but if you want a lot of complexity, look at *NASCAR* or the upcoming *Indy Car Racing II*. *—Mike Stassus*

TECH SPECS
- **PUBLISHER:** Mindscape
- **SYSTEM:** Win 95 CD-ROM
- **THEME:** Racing
- **MEGS:** 8
- **PLAYERS:** 1
- **LEVELS:** N/A

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LIVING in the BELLY of the BEAST

Cyberdreams brings the chilling imagination of author Harlan Ellison to your desktop with its new interactive release *I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream*. Staying very close to the original story line, this game provides a side trip into the darker side of human nature generally ignored in the gaming industry.

For Ellison fans, this game is a dream come true. The Mouthy One worked closely with the designers of the game, and even plays the voice of the evil computer opponent. In the game, Earth has been scoured clean of humanity by a master computer designed to keep it safe. The computer, known as AM, kept five humans alive inside itself to torment them—just as a reminder of how much it loathes humans (which is most likely far less than the amount that Ellison loathes computers). After 109 years of this existence, and AM's slow slide toward insanity, the opportunity arises for an escape. Each of the five remaining humans must overcome their weaknesses and keep their dark desires in check to succeed. The player must guide each of the five characters through a scenario designed specifically for them by AM. Each character's scenario contains a multitude of moral pitfalls, all of which must be avoided in order to attain success. As the player progresses through the game, information is uncovered about a lost lunar colony locked in cryogenic sleep, of which AM is unaware. This colony provides humanity's only chance for survival and the player's as well.



Graphically, the game resembles the *King's Quest* series, however the animation has a decidedly dark quality, understandably staying in line with the plot. Interaction is very intuitive with a command menu constantly displayed across the bottom of the screen. Progression through the game is accomplished through the tried-and-true "find items and use them" method.

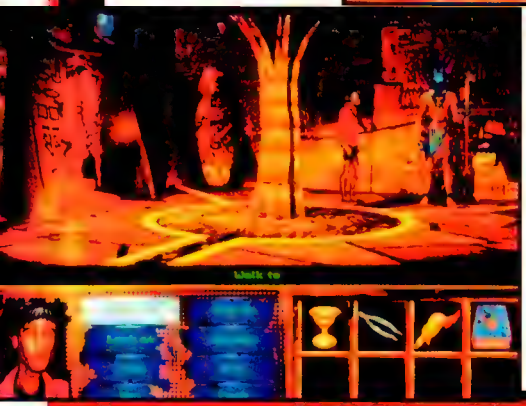
All things considered, *I Have No Mouth and I Must Scream* doesn't offer anything that cannot be found in a dozen other titles already on the market. However, for this type of game it provides quite a lot of entertainment, in addition to a look at a genre barely touched upon in this media.

—John Withers

TECH SPECS

- **PUBLISHER:** Cyberdreams
- **SYSTEM:** PC
- **THEME:** Science Fiction/Adventure
- **MEGS:** 1.4 HD Space
- **PLAYERS:** 1
- **LEVELS:** N/A

i23½45



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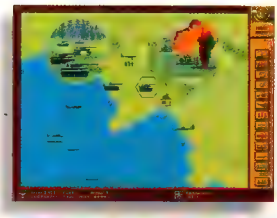
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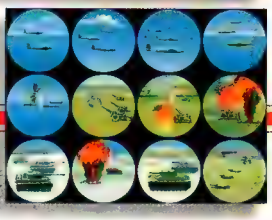
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CULTURE SHOCK

RUMBLE 4 RUBBLE



In *Command and Conquer*, a meteor wallops the Earth and its impact can't be measured in pounds per square inch alone. This astro-rock's contents contain a mineral so powerful that it can power new generations of weapons. In fact, he that controls the mineral controls the planet.

As a master strategist, you begin *Command and Conquer* by deciding whether you wish to command the forces of order or the forces of terror as they attempt to conquer everything that stands in the way. Though they're evenly matched, both sides have unique strengths and weapons. You play from a god's-eye perch, allocating forces as they develop towns, mine, stalk the enemy and defend themselves. It's sort of *SimCity* under military attack.

The game is divided into separate campaigns, beginning with a small army defending a beach. Looking down from your perch, you see the main camp and your men and vehicles; the rest of the screen is blacked out. Assigning builders to expand your encampment, you send your men to survey the area. As they explore, the screen displays the surrounding landscape. Part of the fun is that you never know if the blackness hides enemies or minerals.

As the game progresses, the battles become longer and allocating your personnel and supplies requires some real thought. By mid-game, you can construct manufacturing plants for building advanced weapons, tank and aircraft. You have to scout, build, fight and conquer to win this game; playing conservatively leads to a long and frustrating death.

Overall, *Command and Conquer* is an exceptional strategy title that was well worth waiting for. Not only has Westwood set a new standard for this kind of gameplay, they've dressed it up with beautiful 3-D animations and an engrossing story line. —*Steve Kent*



TECH SPECS

- **PUBLISHER:** Westwood/Virgin
- **SYSTEM:** PC CD-ROM
- **THEME:** Strategy
- **MEGS:** 30
- **PLAYERS:** 1
- **LEVELS:** N/A





BILL AND TEK'S EXCELLENT ADVENTURE

It was no surprise to see William Shatner on David Letterman plugging his new *TekWar* property, the *Doom*-style CD-ROM game of the same name. *TekWar* is Shatner's baby, a series of sci-fi novels written by the actor, who then went on to take up a role in the TV film adaptations. Now that the property has leaped into another medium, Shatner is not far behind.

Appearing in video segments of the game, Shatner plays his old character, Walter Bascom, the head of the elite Cosmos detective agency set 50 years in the future. The player, in turn, takes up the role of an ex-cop who's come to work for Shatner's character. Bascom provides players emotional support and briefs them on their mission: to capture the sinister creators of the Tek drug, the TekLords. As the Tek Lords were responsible for framing the player several years ago, it's a role you take up readily.

TekWar has its good and bad points. The graphics and 3-D modeling are excellent, the responses to the character's moves are quick and the gameplay is enjoyable for both action game beginners and experts. However, the soundtrack is damn weak, unlike the similar *Dark Forces*, which had sound like a Hollywood film. Apparently the programmers spent so much time working on the look and feel of the game that the tunes were an afterthought.

Though it has its faults, *TekWar* is still worth a shot. If you like a good *Doom*-style action romp, you'll probably enjoy it—but if you're any sort of gaming prima donna, you may want to steer clear. —*Roy Bassave*

TECH SPECS

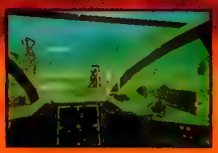
- **PUBLISHER:** Capstone
- **SYSTEM:** IBM DOS CD-ROM
- **THEME:** Action
- **MEGS:** 50 MB
- **PLAYERS:** 1
- **LEVELS:** 3

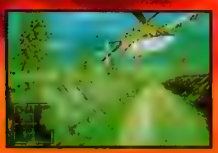




AH-3 THUNDERSTRIKE

When the enemy is coming at you from the ground and the air, it helps if you can see in all directions. AH-3 Thunderstrike: Air Assault™ offers a 360 degree rotating cockpit view that allows you to look for incoming enemies without changing your flight path. If you see them before they see you, you've got a better chance of targeting your weapons. High-powered rockets, machine guns and missiles increase your kill ratio. Who knows...with a little luck, maybe your chopper won't look like swiss cheese at the end of the day.





NR
Not Rated

JVC

PC CD-ROM

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D & D Revisited



Interplay has strapped on their armor, prepared their runes and marched off into another *Dungeon Master* game, and while the first was one of the best computer role-playing games of its time, *Dungeon Master II: The Legend of Skullkeep* only partially fills its father's shoes.

In *DMII*, the player takes the role of a young garrison soldier who finds evil has invaded the world through a dimensional portal. Since it's your shift, he wakes a few stalwart fighters and runs off to close the portal, killing everything in his way.

As far as game mechanics go, this is a basic, four party member, dungeon crawl with VGA graphics. The character system is composed of four different classes that combine a series of skills. As the skills of a class are used, the character moves up in that class. Hence, all party members can gain skill of differing amounts in all of the classes. The magic system uses runes to cast spells, and the player must learn which combination of runes creates which spells.

There are many hours of adventuring in this game, with more than enough puzzles and battles to keep most going for a while. However, the engine feels a bit dated, with uninspiring graphics and clumsy two-handed combat. For those craving a D&D fix, this is just the ticket. But, if you're looking for a state-of-the-art CRPG, your quest probably won't end here.

—John P. Withers



Totally Horrorshow





Once again, Sierra On-line breaks new ground with their latest release, *Phantasmagoria*. This macabre tale brings PC gamers something we have seldom seen—fear. The plot is familiar to any horror fan: A young couple moves into a beautiful house only to find it haunted...and oddly enough, one becomes possessed. With over two hours of captivating video spanning seven CD-ROMs, the player's enjoyment is assured.

The player begins the game in the role of Adrian Delaney. Adrian and her husband Donald Gordon have just moved into a beautiful, large, old New England home located on a private island. After unpacking, Adrian begins exploring the house. To her consternation, she finds strange things afoot. This strangeness becomes compounded by the odd and uncharacteristic actions of her mate. Adrian must discover the source of the evil and put it to rest in order to preserve her sanity as well as her life.

As with most horror stories, the element of violence looms large. Sierra has neither glamorized nor underplayed the violent aspects of this story. They serve it up stark and cold, the way violence really is. And it's displayed with such gritty realism that some scenes may even be disturbing to younger or more delicate gamers. *Phantasmagoria* incorporates excellent graphics with stunning sound. The actors are shot against a blue background then dropped into fully rendered scenes. The level of detail is exceptional considering how well the game runs on a 486/66. The soundtrack blends seamlessly with the story, providing full, rich sound worthy of Hollywood's best cinematic efforts. This game simply is a feast for the senses. It's an intriguing foray into the realm of horror guaranteed to delight a wide range of audiences.

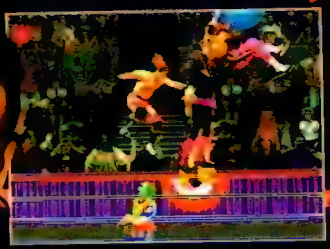
—John Withers







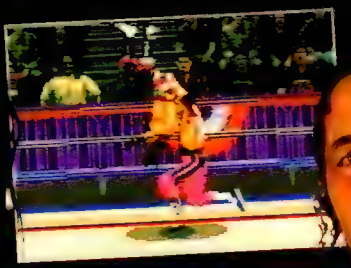
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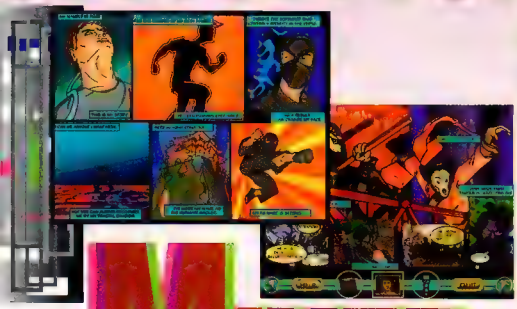
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MIXED MEDIUMS

Inverse Ink may be the first real company to take the comics medium to the computer. *Reflux* centers around a character that can jump into cyberscape to take on different roles. At times, he can "Flux" into different people with preestablished limitations (sort of like jumping into an RPG). He soon finds something is wrong as he discovers an old friend's brain (previously thought destroyed) is active and loose in the artificial computer world.

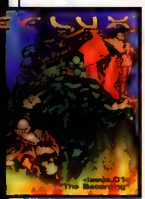
The adventure is laid out in traditional comic-like pages When you click on a panel, a variety of things can happen. Sometimes you may only get the text in the panel read to you. Another variation on this is the panel is read but the cartoon graphic moves a la *Clutch Cargo*. Even further, the panel may have a close-up where a character morphs into another form. Finally, some panels dissolve into what looks like an old live-action chopsocky flick. Occasionally, during the action, screen elements like a file folder will flash. When you click on them, it provides additional background info to what's up.

Reflux is actually pretty fun. Unlike previous attempts to bring the comics to this format, *Reflux* actually pulls the reader into the story and makes each panel a fun surprise. My only problems with the title are that the character voices could have been a little better. In contrast with the effective background music, they come off as being fairly stilted. Fortunately, those quibbles don't prevent the viewer from enjoying him or herself. —*Frank Kurtz*

TECH SPECS

- **PUBLISHER:** Inverse Ink/Spectrum Holobyte
- **SYSTEM:** Macintosh
- **THEME:** Science Fiction/Adventure
- **MEGS:** 1.4 HD Space
- **PLAYERS:** 1
- **LEVELS:** N/A

1 2 3 1/2 4 5



MAGIC carpet ride

Last year, the release of *Magic Carpet* created a sensation within the computer gaming industry. With the speed of the flight engine, impressive graphics and no-holds-barred action, it seemed improbable to improve upon the game...but they've managed to pull it off.

Magic Carpet II: The Netherworld retains the central theme of the original—the player is a wizard who accumulates manna to win the game—as well as the realistic duplication of movement and fluidity of flying through the air. Now it's 70 percent faster, and the stakes have been upped even further. Vissuluth the Dark One has grown powerful enough to bridge the dimensional gulf between your realm and the netherworld, and you, a simple apprentice, are all that stands in his way.





But all melodrama aside, *Magic Carpet II* also offers new landscape effects, new challenges to face and new adversaries that are anything but pushovers. A fast trigger-finger is still necessary, but now the player faces a wide range of tasks before he or she can complete the various stages. To assist the wizard in his quest are a new set of spells that are both spectacular and deadly in effect, such as Gravity Well and Whirlwind.

This sequel is not only enjoyable to play, it's great to look at as well. There is incredible attention to graphic details, such as the shadows cast from every object and creatures that not only rotate but also lengthen as the day goes on. Overall, everything pans out into a most impressive mix. If you didn't believe in magic before, chances are you may after you play this title. —*Roy Bassave*

TECH SPECS

1 2 3 4 5



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FAST AND FURIOUS

Microsoft is going to make Windows 95 the ideal PC-based gaming platform. *Fury3* is a testament to this commitment. Those of you who used to say Windows is great for business apps but can't play games worth squat will eat your words playing *Fury3* by Microsoft.

Fury3 is the Windows 95 enhanced version of the successful DOS-based shooter *Terminal Velocity*. The same programming and design team, collectively known as Terminal Reality, who brought *Terminal Velocity* to life, has re-engineered their creation to work under Microsoft's new (and old Windows) OS and the results are stunning.

For those few readers unfamiliar with Terminal Reality's DOS edition, *Terminal Velocity* is a first-person 3-D shooter featuring smooth, fast rendering, misty landscapes swarming with ships and ground targets galore. It's blast-happy heaven. To spice up the game, tunnels are populated throughout that need to be successfully navigated through at high speeds to progress through the planet stages. Many of these same game elements were incorporated into the Windows 95 edition. Several enhancements were made, primarily in the graphics and sound departments. The ships are sleeker and more attractive, the bad guys have a fresh coat of paint and the soundtrack has been pumped up even louder and is more driving. But some features from the DOS version were also removed, most notably the multiplayer capability. This is surprising, considering that Microsoft is pushing Windows 95 to be a high-connectivity network OS. Another interesting development consideration with *Fury3* is that unlike many Windows 95-based games scheduled to be released later this year and early next year, *Fury3* was not built using the highly publicized Microsoft Games SDK. The main reason for this was Terminal Reality approached Microsoft with bringing the *Fury3* concept to Windows 95 long before the Games SDK was entering the beta cycle. In order to release the game within weeks after the advent of Windows 95, Microsoft allowed the programming team flexibility in the creation of the underlying graphic and sonic guts of the game to be employed using Terminal Reality's proprietary designs. This allowed the game to be a showpiece while at the same time keeping it from shipping months after the Windows 95 awareness and ad campaigns were winding down.



TECH SPECS

- **PUBLISHER:** Microsoft
- **SYSTEM:** Multimedia PC or compatible with 486DX2/66 or higher microprocessor running Microsoft Windows 3.1 or Microsoft Windows 95
- **THEME:** Action/Shooter
- **MEGS:** 8 MB of RAM and 30 MB of additional hard-disk space
- **PLAYERS:** 1
- **LEVELS:** Eight Planets 24 different missions

123½45

The game takes advantage of the Windows 95 environment by running within a window. Like any other window, it can be resized, maximized or minimized all while the game is live. And because it's a native Windows 95 app (although it must be noted that *Fury3* can also run under Windows 3.x using the Win32s API's that transform Windows 3.x subsystems from 16-Bit to 32-Bit operation), it can run side by side with word processing and spreadsheet programs—a real productivity killer! The window resizing also helps when running the game on less than optimal systems. The other unique ability that *Fury3* has is the ability to play the game in Full-Screen Mode, even when running Windows at high-resolution modes, such as

Continued on p 144.)

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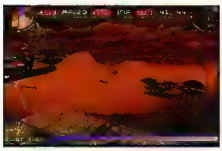
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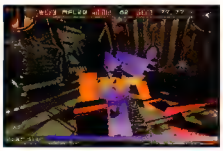
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1024x768, with little perceivable loss in frame update. Obviously, the optimal resolution settings for the game, like most Windows-based games, is 640x480 at 256-color display. Even though the game's graphics have been highly optimized, anything less than a 90MHz Pentium will not do the game justice. Like all fast-paced graphic games, *Fury3* pleads for the fastest clock speed possible to be fully playable. Only a P-133 can handle the mega-onslaught of graphic gunk flying about on screen and still



maintain an acceptable speed. Inexplicably, even on a P-133, the full-motion video interludes experience frame tearing, a product of pre-Windows 95 gaming limitations.

Gameplay itself is straightforward and the ship's controls are very easy to learn and use. The game plays best using a joystick, especially using Microsoft's new SideWinder 3D Pro digital joystick. The name of the game: Shoot everything except the green, organic-looking stuff and collect power-ups and energy boosts along the way. As the levels increase, so do the



number of objects being flung at you. However, the game's difficulty does not increase proportionately. As long as power-ups are collected along the way, the foes seem to possess the same strengths and weaknesses on Level 20 that they did on Level 3. While this does lead to repetitive gameplay, there are enough explosions and missiles flying about to keep you busy.

The levels themselves are inventive and visually impressive. With eight different planet environments, each planet surface has its own unique graphic properties. Tunnels on each level range from wild, rotating structures to psychedelic, seizure-inducing, pulsating colors. Some levels feature high-rise buildings jutting past the cloudline while others feature desolate, flat plains of electrifying steel. I especially enjoyed Planet 4, New Kroy, with its *Blade Runner*-like skyline of Sid Mead angular building designs, complete with billboards advertising "BIONS want you. NOW." (The Bions are the race of mechanized megalomaniacs you are swatting back all the way to their home planet—in other words, they are the flies and you are the fly swatter.) The first few end-planet level bosses are pushovers while the last two require you to enlist the help of the handy save-game feature that can keep you from losing your patience and the game.

> "If you're stuck or you want to quickly peruse the eight different worlds that *Fury3* has to offer, type 'movemst' followed by two spaces, the planet (1-8) you want to warp to."

Overall, *Fury3* represents an exciting launch for the Microsoft Windows 95 game line. While the gameplay may be criticized for its repetitive nature and lack of multiplayer options, it is still a very stunning achievement in turning what was once an OS relegated to business applications and plodding multimedia entertainment into one of the most high-speed, visually overwhelming and vertigo-inducing hypnotic rides of your entire life!

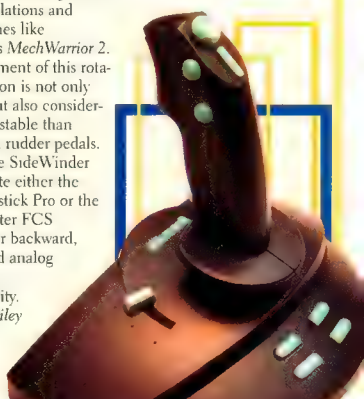
—*Mike Riley*

NOBODY DOES IT

Microsoft is intent not only on providing game software, but also on the hardware to support it. Introducing the Microsoft SideWinder 3D Pro joystick. This durable, attractive and intelligently engineered piece of gaming hardware really does a number on old-fashioned analog joysticks. Because the stick's movements are digitally tracked, drifting is non-existent. This enhancement arrives just in time for high-speed PCs that have a history of timing and drifting problems using analog joysticks. Digital also means responsive. Unlike analog joysticks that lag behind rapid movement shifts, the SideWinder keeps pace with your intentions. In fact, the tracking is so tight that it takes getting used to, especially if you're used to using analog joysticks in high-speed, fast-action games like *Fury3*. But like the ergonomic Microsoft Mouse, once you use the Microsoft SideWinder 3D Pro joystick, going back to the old hardware just doesn't cut it anymore.

As you can see, the SideWinder features four buttons on the main shaft, an eight-way hat switch, four more buttons on the base and a slider that can be used for incremental throttle changes. What you can't see is the very cool rotation the stick makes, incorporated into games as rudder or turret control. This feature works great with flight simulations and action games like Activision's *MechWarrior 2*. The placement of this rotation function is not only sensible but also considerably more stable than floor-based rudder pedals. Finally, the SideWinder can emulate either the CH Flightstick Pro or the Thrustmaster FCS joysticks for backward, DOS-based analog joystick compatibility.

—*Mike Riley*





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SOUR GRAPES – CRANBERRIES CD-ROM LEAVES A TART AFTERTASTE



Interactive multimedia, since its inception, has promised the public a new way of perceiving the world. With that in mind, the cranberries borrowed from both Aldous Huxley and Jim Morrison, in creating their first foray into CD-ROM technology. Obviously referencing Huxley's "Doors of Perception" *the cranberries: doors and windows* fails to add any mind-altering insight into the band, their music or CD-ROM technology.

First off, for an inherently organic band like the cranberries, the forum of interactive technology is a poor choice. The Irish quartet's multiplatinum *Everyone Else Is Doing It, So Why Can't We?* was a mix of Celtic melodies and Irish folksongs infused with a rock 'n' roll feel. Led by the fiery Dolores O'Riordan, the cranberries created a unique link between the history of Irish music and alternative rock. With *doors and windows*, the cranberries' aural power is thoroughly diluted by visual slickness of the technology and the audio falterings of the CD-ROM. The creators of *doors and windows* seem unaware of the unique appeal of the cranberries.

The CD-ROM revolves around the premise of exploring various doors and windows, where the user is given the choice of clicking on various hot-spots that reveal both audio and video snippets of the cranberries. But the intimacy and supposed behind-the-scenes access is nothing but a facade. Whether one explores The Pub, The Living Room or Backstage, disappointment reigns. Interviews, live footage and the band's actual music are few and far between. With relative ease the user can click on a window to see one of the band members swigging from a bottle and declaring: "I really like Guinness." But trying to find an actual cranberries' song is a daunting and frustrating experience.

In *doors and windows*, the music plays second fiddle to the technology. One journeys from room to room in a *Myst*-like manner, but instead of stumbling across clues, the user just stumbles over filler. From the faux-interview section, where the band is ignorantly asked: "How big do you want to be?" to the inane video/audio clip of a soundcheck (how exciting!), *doors and windows* fails to allow any insight into the group.



doors and windows
- Philips Multimedia
- Mac/Windows

i2345

The supposed highlight of the CD-ROM, a rarely seen/heard video/audio clip of *Zombie* from Woodstock '94 is utterly brief and limited. Viewed on a partial screen (no bigger than a business card) one gets no idea what it must have felt like for the band to play Woodstock or what it would feel like to be a fan watching the cranberries play Woodstock. By the closing credits, the new ways of perception promised in the title are never actualized. One would think, with all the technology available to both the band and Philips Multimedia, someone could have created a CD-ROM that was at least partially as interesting as one of O'Riordan's screams.

—*Garrick Schmitt*

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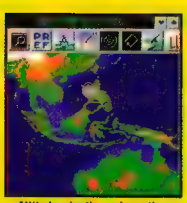
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INTRACORP

CULTURE SHOCK

THE BALLAD OF BILLIE JOE





TAKING OUT THE EUROTRASH

Imagine a divergent time line where back in the mid-'80s Bjork left the Sugarcubes to take part in Sonic Youth and the end result might be something similar to Blonde Redhead. [It's a pretty good divergent time line, as divergent time lines go. It's not like Hitler became president of the United States or anything.—*Ed.*]

It's no surprise to find that Blonde Redhead has opened for not only Sonic Youth, but also Free Kitten and The Boredoms. There's a certain aesthetic of all three bands combined into the band's sound, though they're a bit sleepier than this triumvirate combination. Vocalist Kazu Makino isn't quite as frigging insane as The Boredoms (or Bjork, for that matter), but add three parts valium and it ends up being a much more apt comparison. Meanwhile, mellow main vocalist Amedeo Pace could often be interchanged with Sonic Youth's Thurston Moore, which is nothing but a compliment.



The first and best song on the album, *(I am taking out my eurotrash) I still get rocks off*, sets the stage for what the listener should expect from the rest of the album, combining lilting vocals (from both Pace and Makino), flittering guitar and a healthy sense of humor. The following tracks repeat and serve.

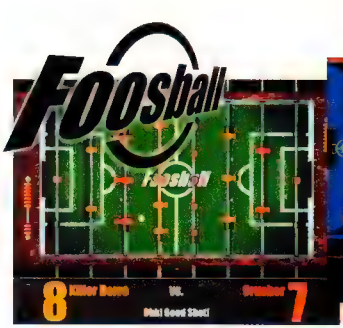
While *La Mia Vita Violenta* may not overwhelm straight off, its subtleties are infectious, and repeated listenings soon greedily suck the listener in. Love it.

Joe Fielder

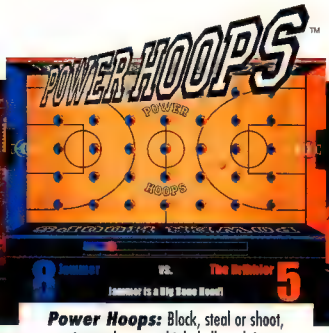
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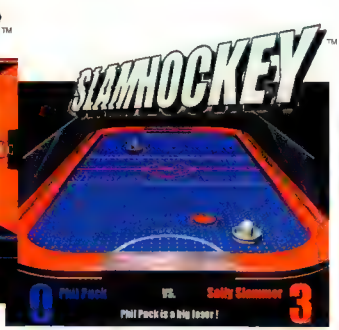
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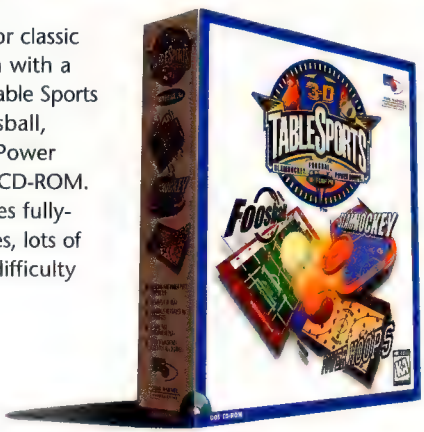


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LOVE AMERICAN STYLE

G. Love calls the jambalaya of funk, blues and rap that he and his crew Special Sauce play "ragmop," whatever that is. Delivered in a slurred white-boy patois that even the Beastie Boys wouldn't attempt, the Love thang is a compelling concatenation of styles, from New Orleans shuffle to street beat to funky groovin'. But all the attention garnered by G. Love's post-modern fusion of these various down-home styles obscures the fact that the cat basically writes bad-ass pop songs. Not Debbie Gibson pop songs, but the kind of stuff that gets your head boppin' and your butt movin', the kind that makes you say, "Damn, I gotta walk over to the stereo and play that last one again!"

The leadoff track on *Coast to Coast Motel*, the Love crew's second disc, is a perfect example of Love's ingenious melange: A chunky, funky riff stolen from Led Zeppelin anchors a loping hook and G. Love's laughable but infectious rhymin' and stealin'. That track and other swinging favorites like *Kiss and Tell* and *Soda Pop* are delivered without much studio polish, but the front-porch symphony created by G.'s guitar, his harmonica and his shambling backup crew doesn't really need it. But there is one thing I have to tell Mr. Love: Sir, you are white. You are not a poor black man born in the Mississippi Delta, so ease up on the white-boy-trying-to-act-black routine! When Love does lay off the *faux* lingo, as he does on the pretty acoustic song *Coming Home*, he proves that, white or black, he's got that songwriting thing down.

—*Mo Ryan*



G. Love and Special Sauce
■ *Coast to Coast Motel*
■ Capitol
12345

ONE HOT GUITAR TEMP







At long last, one of the most anticipated CDs of the year has been crapped-out by those lovable funky pranksters and their newest guitar temp Dave Navarro (formerly of a short-lived quartet known as Jane's Addiction). *One Hot Minute* is a cohesive conglomeration of Navarro's brilliant trademark guitar work and traditional Chili Pepper funky "bounce."

Perhaps the biggest question that comes to mind by anybody who knows Dave Navarro's past is, "What the hell is he doing?!?" He hasn't been shy about telling reporters that funk makes him feel dumb and he can't relate to it...so what's he doing?!? No one knows, but this album proves he defintely belongs there.

In countless interviews, Navarro and the Chili Peppers explain their unholy union as both parties taking a step toward the other's musical style. However, the outcome leaves listeners wishing the Chili Peppers had taken a couple of steps more toward Navarro instead, as the most memorable tracks on the CD are obviously Navarro fortified.

RED HOT CHILI PEPPERS
■ *One Hot Minute*
■ Warner Bros.
12345

Listening to *One Hot Minute* and *Transcending*, you can practically hear Perry Farrell whining in the background. These songs overtake the Chili-funk like a rolling 15-foot-high psychedelic wave.

But don't be afraid, the classic Peppers sound can be found in several places on the CD Look for power-house tunes liked *Warped* and *Shallow Be Thy Game* to keep the testosterone-fueled funk flowing on the MTV. Somewhat of a departure from the classic stuff is *Pea* (written and performed by Flea), which comes across as a short, personal rant on the trials of being a little guy. Anemic at first, it grows on you like a kids' nursery rhyme.

Fans should be pleased with *One Hot Minute*, while fans of Navarro will be screaming for more. That's the paradox of the union: Navarro is too good to sit back and play backup to drums and bass. The challenge now will be how to keep all parties satisfied, including us.

—*Dean Hager*

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CULTURE SHOCK

THE ADLER MACHINE



Over the years, David Bowie has taken on various theatrical personas to convey his music and messages, leaving broken taboos and warped gender roles in his wake (Ziggy Stardust, anyone?). Bowie's current album only continues in this grand tradition, taking on the cybernetic future by way of Jack the Ripper.

This time, the experimental *Outside* finds the artist as Nathan Adler, a "detective professor" investigating art crimes at the turn of the next century. A non-linear text piece accompanies the album, full of concepts both horrible and compelling. The art crime, for example, is a mix of performance art and serial killing—at once a commentary on an increasingly dehumanizing society and a dehumanizing act, all rolled into one.



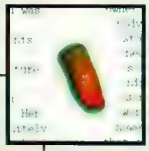
From the start, it's obvious that Bowie has accomplished the first part of creating a concept album: food for thought. Unfortunately, the musical support for these concepts is disappointingly low.

On its best tracks, *Outside* comes off like a watered-down Nine Inch Nails (*The Heart's Filthy Lesson*, *Hallo Spaceboy*) and at its worst, airy techno-industrial (*No Control*). Neither are strong enough in either direction to praise or condemn the album, but instead leave it almost innocuous, failing to support the strengths of the album's concepts.

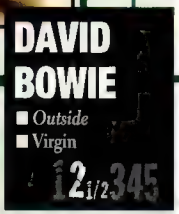
Co-producer Brian Eno's presence in the album is easy enough to discern. As ambient sounds, metallic guitars and Bowie's fey English voice glide in and out of the fray, they do so with a trademark Eno smoothness that makes up much of the album's strength.

As *Outside* the first of a proposed trilogy of Bowie experiments, one can only hope that the artist will realize what worked and what didn't in the album, and build upon that for the sequel.

—Joe Fielder









THE HOLE TRUTH



Ask for it, Hole's new six-song EP, is meant to appease frontwoman Courtney Love's fans while her next record is in production. Like the Smashing Pumpkins' *Pisces Iscariot* and Nirvana's *Incesticide*, *Ask For It* collects Hole rarities, B-sides and live versions for popular consumption.

Whereas most consider these albums and EP's throw-aways and filler, occasionally each will turn up a sonic gem or add further musical insight into an already popular artist.

That sentiment holds true with *ask for it*. With three cover songs and three originals, Hole's EP captures a brief, but a rather ragged edge of the band. *Drown Soda*, *Doll Parts* and *Violet* were all recorded live for the John Peel Sessions for BBC Radio and are nothing more than dullard filler.

The true attraction to *ask for it* revolves around the cover songs. In tribute to the Pacific Northwest, Hole covers The Wipers' *Over the Edge* in full grunge bombast and in yet another paean to Seattle, the band covers *Hot Chocolate Boy* by Beat Happening. Both intriguing covers cast Love, much like her late husband, as a brilliant musical interpreter.

Summarily, her rendition of Lou Reed's *Pale Blue Eyes* is the core of the EP. Recorded live at The Whiskey in Los Angeles, Love hauntingly casts her late-husband (Kurt Cobain) as the pale blue eyes that "linger on." Love's voice swerves from gentle beauty to pure fury over a squall of guitars as she eerily foreshadows Cobain's eventual suicide. Chilling and unforgettable, Love's *Pale Blue Eyes* makes *Ask For It* an essential listen.

—Garrick Schmitt

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CULTURE SHOCK

JURASSIC LARK

Reading *The Lost World*, Michael Crichton's sequel to *Jurassic Park*, is kind of like watching the final few installments of *Friday the 13th* movies: The humans are deadly dull and barely deserve to act as cannon fodder, so the only anticipation comes from the variety of ways they're munched.

This version of *The Lost World* is vastly superior to Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's novel of the same name. Unfortunately, it lacks the zest of that novel and especially of *Jurassic Park*. Like *JP*, *Lost World* begins with quite a few expository



chapters introducing good guys like Ian Malcolm (the mathematician and only holdover from the first book...who apparently died on Isla Nublar, but has since gotten better in classic Monty Python manner), bad guys like Dodgson (any bad guy out to steal dino eggs for the sake of pure exploitation must surely die a nasty death, and he does) and annoying people who deserved to get knocked off but don't.

As with all of Crichton's books, character development is generally left on the back burner to explore social or scientific theories, dressed up as a pretty good adventure yarn. Even though Crichton's characters usually don't generate much reader empathy, in this novel they're just goofy.

The real stars of the book are the terrible lizards. You asked for it, you got it: more raptors, more Rex, more loose dinos. If you dig dino carnage, you'll have a good time with this book. If you like novels with well-written characters and startling plot developments, check out *Raptor Red*. —*Don Butler*

FAN BOY 101



The people and worlds created by artist Daniel Clowes are often hideous, disturbing, nightmarish, cruel and ultimately horribly true. More often than not, Clowes' narratives are filled past the brim with images that disturb, while ironically making the reader laugh. And we laugh because we realize the artist is digging into the rich, warped psyche of the American Dream.

In *Pussey!*, we see Clowes taking aim at a fairly obvious target: the world of superhero comics and the people who work there (certainly worthy of parody). The main character, Dan Pussey, appears to be an empty vessel whose entire life has been devoted to the superhero genre.





Through a series of stories, we see the boy who's read too many superhero comics, the artist who started drawing them, the big-time "hot" artist and finally, the bitter old man who doesn't understand why people don't know who he is and what he did with his life (never realizing the futility of it). This is viciously funny stuff with an edge that could cut through a whole pile of platinum-covered comic books (granted that only barely a hint of story is present inside).

Pussey! is a hilarious read. At times it seems petty, but no more than the industry it lambastes. It's funny and so



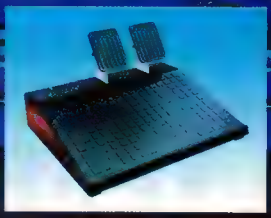
true that it may make you think twice about picking up the next "hot" comic with the guy in long underwear on the cover.

—*Frank Kurtz*

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CULTURE SHOCK



STRIP TEASE

Berke Breathed graced the funny pages for more than 15 years, first with *Bloom County* and then its sequel, *Outland*. For everyone else who started their mornings with a dose of Breathed's hilarious social commentary, *One Last Little Peek* is the moment we've all been dreading; it is a collection of the final *Outland* strips.

Breathed is notorious for bringing to light humanity's greatest embarrassments In fact, he often removes the disguises humanity's accomplishments wear and reveals an underlying ugliness. Satire is a pretty rote tool for strip artists looking for any cheap laugh they can get, but Breathed's craftsmanship has few equals.

One Last Little Peek compiles the wittiest lampoons of Bill Gates' megalomanical grip on the world seen to date. In Bill Gates and "Microsquash," Breathed has finally found the technocrat that personifies the fear of the computer age and the longing for simpler things inundating Breathed's work since the advent of "The Dandelion Patch" in *Bloom County*.

When *BC* ended five years ago, Breathed came back just as strong with *Outland*. Anyone looking for a final fix of Opus and Bill shouldn't be disappointed. Breathed throws in some old favorites with personal commentary. He even shares some of the fan mail he's received



ONE LAST LITTLE PEEK
■ Art & Story
■ Publisher

from the likes of Leonard Nimoy and *To Kill a Mockingbird* author Harper Lee. The only thing *One Last Little Peek* lacks is a sense of finality—meaning fans can find comfort in the hope that one day Breathed will return to the funny pages.

—John Born

SURVIVING THOSE AWKWARD TEEN YEARS

The unusual work of Charles Burns has graced the cover of *Time* Magazine, run as a series on MTV and even appeared on beer ads on huge city billboards. Pretty amazing, considering that many people find his work disturbing.

In the past, Burns' horrific images were often subdued by intentional humor. This time, it's obvious the artist has given up any desire to do so. *Black Hole* is a coming-of-age story gone horribly awry. Burns' young, confused characters stumble through the hardest time of their lives with the added baggage of a disease among them called "The Bug" that works as an allegory for every sexual disease from VD to AIDS. The Bug appears to have quick effects, resulting in mutations—with the possibility of acting as a harbinger of a new race of creatures that hide among us. If H.P. Lovecraft had decided to write a teen romance, the result may have ended up eerily similar.

■ ART & STORY
Charles Burns
■ PUBLISHER
Kitchen Sink
12345

BLACK HOLE #2



Burns' nightmare vision moves along in a quiet, realistic manner regardless of his highly stylized art. *Black Hole*'s power comes from being steeped in adolescent horrors we've all experienced, mixed with the growing adult fears of events we're powerless to stop and that are much too small for us to see.

—Frank Kurtz



THINK OF IT AS LITTLE TOY BLOCKS

ON GREAT BIG STEROIDS



Remember the simple joy of building with blocks? Now take that mental image and pump it up. Way up. Because with SimCity 2000, you construct an entire city from the ground up—and lead its residents into the next millennium. And instead of chunks of wood, you wield 32-bit, landscape-morphing graphics. So you can expand your city with virtual bulldozers. Or turn 1950s tract homes into a solar-powered techno-burb (hey, this isn't child's play). So get pumped for the ultimate block party: SimCity 2000. Now playing on Sega Saturn. Coming soon for Sony PlayStation.



SEGA SATURN

MAXIS

SIMCITY 2000

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LAST WORD

Rich Heimlich is a noted fan of many products including Life cereal, AMC vehicles, Poprocks and Eurekanuba

A few of Rich's favorite things

I get a lot of mail from readers who believe that I hate everything I encounter. The fact is, I just happen to be one demanding, picky consumer. I don't like shoddy products or deceptively marketed products. Unlike much of the rest of the industry, I believe that it's the truly rare product that deserves raves, products that most everyone can enjoy and depend on. It's in that spirit that I am proud to dedicate this month's column to the products that I can wholeheartedly recommend without hesitation. Each is fully deserving of my Outstanding Excellence award.

Maxis has developed a real sleeper hit in **Space Cadet Pinball** (currently included in the Windows 95 Plus Pack but also due out with two other machines in a product called Full Tilt). We, the always demanding game consumer, haven't had a realistic pinball game since Electronic Arts' Pinball Construction Set from a decade ago. *This* game manages to capture the look, feel and sound of real pinball perfectly. Feel free to dive right in and play, but the real beauty is in the depth of play they've provided. It's that facet that makes this title incredibly replayable and downright addicting.

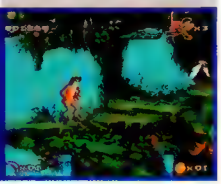
In these times of highly optimized, multimedia megamachines, the power supply has *never* been more important, and you won't realize that until it's too late. A quality power supply will cure more ills than penicillin. When it comes to quality power supplies, you can do no better than **PC Power and Cooling**. Sound cards suddenly sound cleaner, your system locks up less often, the temperature of the system goes down—significantly extending its life, and it's virtually silent. Do your system a favor and call these guys immediately.

Matrox has been producing excellent video cards for Windows users for quite some time. The biggest knock against them was that their products were *dreadfully* painful with DOS applications, especially games. Well, their new Matrox MGA Millennium breaks that barrier. The **Millennium** is simply the best video card you can buy today for *any* PC platform. It's a breeze to set up and get running. This thing must run on the highest octane available to video cards. You won't believe it until you see it for yourself.



The Web has taken off and sites are now more prevalent than trees in most areas. Quality sites are another matter completely. Do *not* miss **ESPNet (http://espnet.sportszone.com)**. It's a sports lover's dream come true.

Pitfall: The Mayan Adventure. Here's a title that has it all on virtually every platform. It's arcade fun at its very best. Unequaled graphics, animations that are creative, fun and often surprising and a soundtrack that's easily among the best of its kind done in the past year. And you can't ask for much more in the way of gameplay. Hard, but not too hard and just enough puzzle work to keep you hooked.



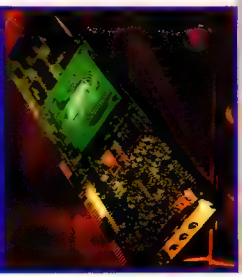
Rand McNally has been doing great work on their road atlas for decades. Now their **TripMaker 96** package keeps that dedication to quality alive and well on the personal computer. This product will not only get you where you want to go, but also provide often irresistible suggestions on other sites of interest along your route. You shouldn't plan a trip without it.



For more mainstream interests, point your virtual surfboard immediately in the direction of the newly fee-free **USA Today site (http://www.usatoday.com)**. This site is virtually packed to the cyberseams with news, interviews, fun, multimedia, information, etc. If their daily paper were this large you'd need a wheelbarrow to carry it around. Of all the sites I visit while using the Web, *none* is more complete than this one and the good news is it's expanding every day.

Hewlett Packard seems to have the Midas touch when it comes to most of their peripherals and the **T1000 tape drive** from the Colorado Memory Systems division is no exception. It uses a new "Travan" cartridge (pronounced, Tra-VON) that can store up to 800 MB of data. You can also get these drives for well under $200. What I find most impressive about this so-called entry-level backup device is its surprising performance.

No sound card is perfect but the **Ensoniq Soundscape Elite** comes close. Plug it in and I'm sure you'll know you made the right choice from the moment you first hear it. It boasts music that far exceeds the quality of its direct competition, a full effects processor, Sound Blaster compatibility, full CD-ROM support, etc. And you'd be hard-pressed to find a better Windows 95 choice.



I fully extend both my congratulations and thanks to all the companies responsible for the products listed above. If more products matched the commitment level of these outstanding companies, then I'm sure the term "Buyer Beware" would be far less widespread. ●

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THE 10 BEST IDEAS WIN

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Nintendo

Biff Kunkel has been playing and reporting on games longer than you've been alive!

Music to Whack Wizards By

When I was younger, in the 10- to 12-year-old range, I developed a somewhat unusual interest. While my friends were ogling automobiles, listening to the Four Seasons and evolving their attitudes toward their newly nubile female peers, I was listening to…movie soundtracks.

And ogling those freshly minted nubiles, of course.

I'm not sure what turned me on to those soundtracks, but I listened to them with a fascination that I can no longer even comprehend. I doted on such diverse fare as the scores from Maurice Jarre's *Lawrence of Arabia*, and Alfred Newman's *How the West Was Won*, to the '50s horror classic *The Thing from Another World* (the movie that transformed the first electronic instrument, the theramin, into the ultimate evocation of audio creepiness) and Max Steiner's magnum opus, the score for *King Kong* (anyone who asks, "Which version of *King Kong*?" shall be immediately escorted from the pages of this magazine, without benefit of a sidebar).

Film soundtracks were not generally found hanging out on the Top Ten alongside Herb Alpert (if you don't know, don't ask) and the Beatles in the '50s and '60s. Occasional hits did spring from films, of course, including *Moon River* (*Breakfast at Tiffany's*), *Love is a Many Splendored Thing* (from the eponymous flick), and even *Baby Elephant Walk* (*Hatari*), but the albums themselves rarely crossed over from their niche marketplace.

Movie soundtracks didn't do well in long-playing format because they were never intended to be listened to outside the context of the film they underscored. There was usually a main title, a romantic theme (the main title slowed down) and an action theme (the main theme sped up).

When moviemakers plugged into the MTV vibe and began decorating their film packages with older, familiar tunes (everything from *Twist & Shout* and *Do You Love Me?* to Warren Zevon's *Werewolves of London*) that sales began to perk up.

This formula has proven so successful that films now include original material from major pop artists (look at the commercial synergy that was created when Seal performed *Kiss from a Rose* in *Batman Forever*) to generate crossover interest in both the movie and the soundtrack.

Now we come to the issue of electronic game music. When some of the brilliant Japanese composers began enjoying commercial success with game-based soundtracks, American publishers decided to pump up the volume as well. In some cases, music CDs featuring tunes from upcoming games were released to the game press as hype-generating gewgaws. EA issued *Signature Sounds*, *EA's Music Sampler*, and the results were fairly predictable: If you liked the game, you dug hearing the music (my personal favorites included Jason Whitely's *Beats to Pieces* from *Desert Strike* and Don Vecca's *Road Rash Thrash*).

These days, hardly a week passes without the arrival of a compendium of *Killer Instinct* "cuts," the score from *Tempest 2000*, or *Kyle Petty's No Fear Racing* soundtrack, courtesy of Williams.

The bottom line remains: Does the public want to hear this stuff when they're not playing the games? Tommy Tallarico's ballyhooed and extremely hot collection of game songs was a commercial disappointment, but the game business is unlikely to give up on this idea—if only so they can merchandise the musician/composers.

The answer may lie in imitating the movie folks—license older titles, then adopt them to fit new games. Eventually, music buyers may even take to the original stuff, but familiarity is a great starting point.

—Bill Kunkel

"The bottom line remains: Does the public want to hear this stuff when they're not playing the games?"



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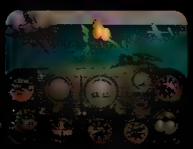
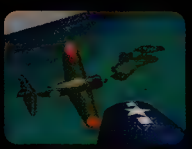


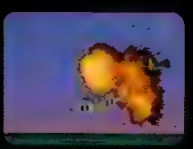
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Welcome to Mr. TenNapel's Neverhood

Video game buff Doug TenNapel is living the game designer dream. With cartoons, toys and talk of a movie based on his quirky creation, Earthworm Jim, TenNapel is in demand. With other deals for television series with Universal and his recent partnership with DreamWorks SKG, the Spielberg/Katzenberg/Geffen multimedia monster, the small-town boy (who drives studio executives around in his beat-up, never-been-washed-and-proud-of-it pick-up truck) now finds himself at the helm of his own game development company, The Neverhood. With his off-beat sense of humor, strong moral values and a runaway imagination, the 6-foot, 8-inch tall TenNapel's career is skyrocketing, while he has somehow managed to stay down to Earth.

How did the deal at DreamWorks come about?

At E³ I announced I was leaving Shiny [Software], and basically, I had offers from quite a few people. I didn't intend to set up a company—I thought I'd just go work for somebody, but it was kind of clear that if I wanted to work in a creative environment, I'd probably have to create it myself. It's been a breeze, [DreamWorks] let us do what we do best, and that's make games.

What types of new games or characters are in development?

Now that we have our own company, we can choose our own format of games. Our next game is not going to be the kind of cookie-cutter platform game that we've been working on. We'll never get stuck into a rut again. We might go back to doing cartridge games some day, with that style of platform, fast-paced game, but I personally kind of dread that now. We did so much of that, after a while, working for the companies. They say, "Here, slap this character in your engine," and that's really degrading. Our first game for DreamWorks is called *The Neverhood*, which is a whole new set of characters that DreamWorks is looking at to put on TV. It's a very odd, strange Dr. Seuss world on trial.

What kind of student were you?

I was heavy on the art, obviously...I spent half the time goofing off with drama and watched a lot of TV—way more TV than a kid should be allowed to watch. *Gilligan's Island* kind of became my mantra, I just watched it so many times over and over again. I was a sci-fi buff, I loved comics, that whole thing. I was the geeky kid that everyone picked on and made fun of; I'm mutant height and really skinny and uncoordinated and all of that. In college it was a lot of fun. We had a close group of friends and their sense of humor ended up almost directly translating into Earthworm Jim.

Did you ever eat a worm?

I've never eaten a worm, but I've eaten a moth.

On purpose?

Yeah, for shock value. My favorite joke used to be to find a moth, put it in my mouth, walk up to [people] and go, "Hi!" and the moth flies out. One time he went back and hit the gag reflex, and I had to swallow him.

What were your favorite games growing up and now?

Back then it was *Pac-Man*, because it was simple—one stick. What more do you need? It's weird, now it's become the classic *Defender*. It's therapeutic saving the humans. [Now] I play a lot of *Virtua Fighter*. It's a fighting game, but it's simplified. I really admire simple stuff...a lot of the newer Sony and Saturn games suck.

As systems improve, how does that affect the design process?

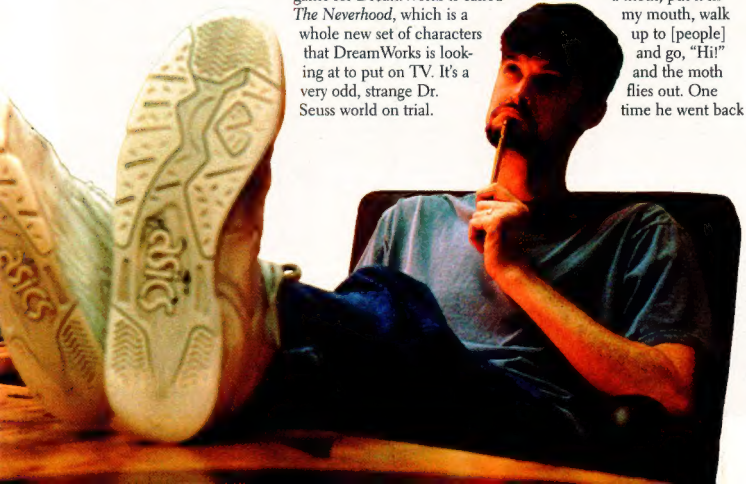
It creates much more problems. Limitations shouldn't really affect a true creative person.. True creative people thrive within limitation. We're getting on to systems that have less and less limitations. So in a way, you have the freedom to create whatever you want, and sometimes, people choose to create great looking games but terrible playing games. In the past, because the games looked so bad, it'd have to be a great game.

What was your first job?

I picked berries in fields with a bunch of migrant workers, and it was a good job. I had to get up at 5 a.m., the thorns poked my fingers and I dreamed of making video games and doing cartoons.

What would you most like to see fall out of a pinata?

I'd be pretty happy if I swacked a piñata and an antigravity device fell out that I could attach to my truck and make it fly. Nothing would give me more joy than to have a policeman come and try to pull me over and just charge that baby up and fly away and look in the rearview mirror at his response. I think that'd be nice.



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